

SOGA CONNECTION

February 2013

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Moving on Up: Athlete Shows What Confidence Can Do at Winter Games

Michelle Pratt's 13 years of sports training and competition in Maryland, Florida and now Georgia has led her to become captain of her basketball team, the Lakers, at State Indoor Winter Games last month in Cobb County. She was one of about 1,800 athletes who competed that weekend.

And with her history of learned skills and newly developed leadership, the Lakers did well. They earned fourth place in Division 3 at All Tournament Players Park. "I was happy with our competition. Everybody was doing what they were taught to do," she said. In addition to competing, Michelle led athletes in warm-ups before games and served as a mentor. "It means a lot to me. If they need anything, they come to me."

Someday she wants to take the team captain position to a higher level: assistant coach.

That goal setting and personal growth is credited to sports competition and social development she learned through Special Olympics Georgia. Michelle and her sister Angela, who played basketball with the Mavericks at Winter Games, have developed confidence in themselves, said their Mom Evelyn. "They get to be a part of a team, where they don't feel different. They're not alone," she said.

Feeling "normal" and having high self-esteem is what it's all about, Evelyn said.

Editor's note: Michelle is the 2013 Athlete Ambassador to SOGA's Law Enforcement Torch Run (LETR) Executive Committee, which was created for the purpose of managing and planning LETR activities.



Michelle Pratt is on the right and Angela Pratt is on the left.

Make the Polar Plunge Saturday, February 16th

Join us as we jump into icy waters of Lake Lanier Feb. 16th. All proceeds collected by "plungers" will benefit the athletes of Special Olympics Georgia. Prizes will be awarded for the best costume, highest fundraiser, highest fundraising team, and more! For those who do not love the Polar Bear habitat, we will have areas to keep you warm – such as heated areas, warm concessions, and fun souvenirs.

Visit <http://www.PolarPlungeGA.com> for details!



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Thank you to Publix Supermarkets!

Georgia [Publix](#) store associates and their customers broke a huge record this year in donations for paper torch icons . . . at least \$490,000 and we're still counting! This amount is 22 percent more than what's been raised in the past.

Thank You Sponsors!

A special THANK YOU to our 2013 State Indoor Winter Games and World Winter Games Sponsors!

Special Olympics Georgia is honored to recognize the following sponsors for their Indoor Winter Games support: Georgia Natural Gas, Winter Construction, Lockheed Martin AERO Club, AutoTrader.com, MetLife, Superior Essex, Inc., Finish Line, firstPRO, Inc., Allied World Assurance Company, and Freeman, Mathis & Gary, LLP.

Special Olympics Georgia is thrilled to share that the following sponsors made it possible for two athletes from Georgia to experience their Special Olympics goals in Pyeong Chang, South Korea for the World Winter Games: MetLife, Bank of America, The Coca-Cola Company, and The BP Foundation.



Check Out the Shop of SOGA Needs

SOGA is excited to announce a new way to give to our athletes! Follow the link to shop for SOGA's needs and decide where your donations go! Making a small donation can make a big impact! Go to <http://www.gift-give.com/specialolympicssga>.



The Big Ketch and You Support SOGA Feb. 11, 12, & 13

The Big Ketch Saltwater Grill in Buckhead will hold Give Back Days for SOGA on February 11th, 12th, and 13th. Simply [print this flyer](#), present it to your server when ordering, and The Big Ketch will donate 10% of your check to Special Olympics Georgia. This offer is valid both for dine-in and take out orders. For more information, contact Susan at Susan.Skolnick@SpecialOlympicsGA.org or 770-414-9390 x111.



Stay Tuned for the New SOGA Web Site

Come February 19, you're going to like what you see when you visit our [Web site](#). Our Web gurus and creators tell us it's going to be much faster and easier to see on cell phones and tablets, etc. Thank you to long-time SOGA marketing consultant and friend Kirk Lancaster and Web site designer and developer Chris Rodriguez for your hard work and expertise.



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Special Olympics Georgia website. At the top, there is a red header with the SOGA logo and the text "Special Olympics Georgia". Below the header is a navigation menu with links to "About Us", "Media", "Athlete Resources", "Volunteer", "Training", "Events", "Support", "Calendar", and "Sponsor". A red "Donate" button is located above the menu. The main content area features a large photo of several people, including children and adults, participating in an event. Below the photo, the date "February 06, 2013" is displayed, along with links to "View the event calendar", "See all news", and "Sign up for our newsletter". There are also four small boxes with text and links: "Are you 'Fore' of a Reason?", "Join us for the 4th Annual Fore Plunge February 16, 2013 Lake Lure Islands Beach & Indoor", "Join us Saturday March 16 at Atlanta Motor Speedway, 1800 Fair Boulevard, Hampton, GA", "Visit Public Relations January 2nd", and "INDOOR WINTER GAMES January 26-27, 2013".

Tickets to Stadion Classic Golf Tournament at UGA

Purchase your tickets to the Stadion Classic at UGA Web.com Tour professional golf tournament April 29th – May 5th at a discounted rate of \$25 per ticket through the TICKETS Fore CHARITY Program, and SOGA will receive 100% of the ticket price from each advanced ticket sale! What a great way to both save yourself some money and support SOGA at no extra cost to you. [Click here for more information on purchasing tickets](#) and [click here for more information on the Stadion Classic at UGA](#).



April 20: Go Over the Edge

Ever wondered if you had what it takes to be fearless and face new challenges head-on? Well, here's your chance! April 20 join "edgers" who are brave enough to raise \$1,000 to rappel over the edge of a 20 story building for Special Olympics Georgia. [Click here](#) to register.



GEICO 5K Road Race to Benefit SOGA

For the 30th year, GEICO is putting on a 5K road race to benefit Special Olympics Georgia. The race is Saturday, March 2nd at 9 a.m., with the start and finish taking place in the parking lot of the old GEICO building in Macon. All participants will receive a t-shirt, and awards will be given to the top three finishers in each age group, with special awards to the overall male, female, masters and grandmaster finishers. For more information, please visit the official GEICO Road Race website at <http://geicoroadrace.com/index.php>.

Get in the 5K Foam Fest March 16

Have some fun and lend a helping hand to Special Olympics Georgia on March 16th in Atlanta! We've partnered up with the 5k Foam Fest – the only obstacle mud run that doubles as a human carwash! Picture a 5k run with over 18 army style obstacles, giant mud pits, and adult-sized bounce houses filled with foam! They'll also be bringing the Death Drop – the WORLD'S LARGEST inflatable slide! Over 3 stories tall and 150 feet long, it's the biggest obstacle in 5k racing! Think you can handle it? Check out the details and see the video at: <http://5kfoamfest.com/locations/Atlanta.php!>



Adopt Your Ducks Today!

It's ...DUCK TIME! The 8th annual [Duck Derby](#) is returning to White Water June 21, benefiting 24,470 athletes. For each duck adoption, a number will be entered on the duck and will be raced for fabulous prizes.

Adoptions cost \$5 per duck but you can increase your chances to win by purchasing a Quack Pack for \$30, which includes six duck adoptions and a souvenir duck or you can purchase a MEGA QUACK PACK, which includes 25 duck adoptions and three souvenir ducks.

If your lucky duck is one of the first five to cross the finish line, you win one of these prizes: a 42" flatscreen TV with DVD and Home Theater System, an IPad mini, a \$300 Publix gift card, an IPod touch, or a \$150 VISA gift card.

For more information on the Duck Derby, contact Leslie Anderson at Leslie.Anderson@SpecialOlympicsGA.org.



Athlete Spotlight: Jamie King

Jamie King is a senior at Perry High School. Jamie started this year with minimal knowledge of basketball, but led his team to win the gold at the 2013 Winter Special Olympics!

Dribbling, shooting and basic fundamentals were really all he knew, but he continued to practice with his teammates as he developed a better understanding and passion for the sport.

Jamie has a wonderful attitude and awesome team and leadership skills on the court, in the classroom, at home and at his part-time job at Kroger. Jamie excels in every area of his life and encourages everyone around him to be successful and never give up.



Sponsor Spotlight: Waffle House

We are excited to announce [Waffle House](#) as the newest sponsor to the Special Olympics Georgia family. They come in as the largest sponsor for the 2013 Polar Plunge and were gracious enough to donate \$5,000 to the athletes of Special Olympics Georgia!

Waffle House® restaurants have offered the unbeatable combination of good food with outstanding service since 1955. This combination has made it a beloved icon of the South for the past 56 years. Waffle House® restaurants provide a unique dining experience where regular customers are greeted by name and enjoy social interaction with their servers and other customers. All food is prepared fresh, cooked to order and served on real china in a kitchen that is out front and in full view.

[Waffle House](#) menu offers a variety of foods, with a breakfast focus and features signature meals along with America's best brands. The taste, quality and portions of the meals ensure customers receive a great value for their money. Menu favorites include Bert's Chili and Lib's Patty Melt along with hashbrowns served eight different ways.

Each restaurant is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and quality is consistent from location to location. Customers enjoy sit-down table service with the speed of delivery found at fast-food establishments.

Headquartered in Norcross, GA, [Waffle House](#) operates more than 1,500 restaurants company and franchisee owned. Waffle House holds the title as the world's leading server of waffles, omelets, T-bone steaks and more. The combination of great food, fast service and friendly experience makes Waffle House® restaurants truly a Unique American Phenomenon.

Thanks again Waffle House for your support of the 4th Annual Polar Plunge! Hope to see everyone on the 16th!



February Volunteer of the Month: John Athens

We all know how important our medical volunteers are to our events but how many times do we actually take the time to notice and thank those volunteers in the red bibs. Not until someone falls and needs an ice pack on a knee or someone gets just a little too hot or someone falls off a bicycle.

Special Olympics Georgia has an amazing group of medical volunteers that are ever present at our State Games, sitting on the sidelines making sure that all of our athletes, coaches, partners, volunteers...anyone at the event!... are safe and get immediate attention if an incident occurs. John Athens is one of those fantastic medical volunteers who you may not know by name but you probably recognize at events. Not only does John come out to volunteer for the weekends of Winter Games, Summer Games and Fall Games but he also volunteers the entire week of Bicycle Ride Across Georgia (BRAG) each June, but on BRAG, he's not keeping watch on the sidelines, he's riding alongside all the bikers on his motorcycle. John also takes part in several motorcycle charity rides around the country...sometimes leaving for one event right after one is over.

Thank you John for being a part of SOGA and BRAG! We can't wait to see you at Games and on your motorcycle in June!



Volunteer Opportunities

5K Foam Fest

March 12-17

Hampton, GA at Atlanta Motor Speedway

SOGA has a lot of entertaining events throughout the year but this one may be the craziest yet. The 5K Foam Fest is all about mud, foam, obstacles and running! Check out the action at <http://5kfoamfest.com/locations/Atlanta.php>. We have volunteer shifts available each day. And anyone who volunteers is able to participate in the 5K for FREE!

Volunteer Graphic Designers Needed

We're looking for a talented graphic designer with at least one to two years of experience to design SOGA's annual report. Please email [Wendy](#).

Bigham@SpecialOlympicsGA.org for more information.

Georgia Elvis Festival

March 15 – 17

Brunswick, GA

Love Elvis? Well, we have the event for you! Come out to volunteer and be a part of the first ever Georgia Elvis Festival taking place in beautiful Brunswick. We

need volunteers to represent SOGA at our booth at the festival. There will be various shifts for that Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

If you are interested in volunteering for any of the above events/positions, please contact Leslie Anderson at Leslie.Anderson@SpecialOlympicsGA.org.

We're Waiting for You on Facebook

Check out the latest updates and news, photos and inspiring videos by getting Special Olympics Georgia updates in your News Feed. [Click here](#) to get to us.



Forward this Email to a Friend

You know people-- family members, friends, work colleagues, just about everywhere you go there's someone you know. Will you introduce Special Olympics Georgia to them? Forward this e-newsletter and ask them to [click here](#) and then click on the Sign-up for the E-newsletter button.



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