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Georgia's Champions

March 2015

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News and Stories

Today Is Spread The Word To End The Word Day

Today is Spread The Word To End The Word Day, which is the official awareness day of raising the consciousness of society about the R-word and how hurtful words can be towards people with intellectual disabilities. Make your pledge today at www.R-word.org.

Here's a look at a few of today's activities around the state and upcoming events for your calendar:



-Today, R-Word announcements are being made in the classrooms of all Stephens County Schools. Schools' halls are lined with banners asking students to pledge to not use the R-word. On March 20th, Stephens County High School will incorporate a R-word Rally at a Powderpuff Football Game, where the cheerleaders and football players swap roles in the game.

-Today, two Monroe County middle schools will offer students wrist bands and pledges to sign to not use the R-word. Fifth graders from three elementary schools will also participate in the day by signing pledges and wearing wrist bands. On March 20th, Mary Persons High School will host a schoolwide R-Word Rally.

-On Thursday, March 5th, Area 15 will host a R-word Rally at Area Games for families, fans, and approximately 300 athletes from Lowndes, Cook, Lanier, and Brooks counties.

-On April 14th, SOGA will hold a R-word Rally at Turner Field's right-field patio at 6 p.m. before the Atlanta Braves game against the Miami Marlins. [Click here](#) to purchase your tickets to the game and join us for the rally! A percentage of

Upcoming Events

Over the Edge May 2nd

Over the Edge is back for its fourth year! On Saturday, May 2nd, "edgers" will rappel 20 stories off the Buckhead Tower in Atlanta for Special Olympics Georgia. Register at www.oteatlanta2015.org. For more information contact [Lucy Faxon](#) or 770-414-9390 x118.



GEICO Walk April 23rd

For the 32nd year, GEICO is organizing and hosting a benefit for Special Olympics Georgia.



This year's event is a 1-Mile Walk on Thursday, April 23rd at 11:30 a.m. on the GEICO Campus in Macon. GEICO's goal is to raise \$70,000. All participants will receive a T-shirt. For more information on sponsoring or participating in the walk, please

each ticket purchased through [this link](#) will go back to Special Olympics Georgia. Please note: the majority of SOGA fans will be in Upper Box seats in sections 407R and 409L. But there are other seats available in different sections, through the purchase link.

Support The Athletes At State Summer Games May 29th-31st

More than 1,800 athletes, 360 unified partners, 700 coaches, 1,700 volunteers, and 1,500 spectators will travel from across Georgia to Emory University for competitions in aquatics, athletics, flag football, long distance running/walking, rhythmic gymnastics, soccer, table tennis, tennis, and volleyball. The cost per athlete for the weekend is \$100.



Please help make an athlete's dream come true with a tax-deductible donation. Any gift amount is greatly appreciated and will be a tremendous help. [Please click here to show your support of the athletes and make your life-changing donation today!](#)

Thank you to our sponsors Aetna (Presenting Sponsor), The Winter Construction Company, AutoTrader.com, UPS, American Honda Motor Company, ADP, ALTA Foundation, Cox Enterprises, SuperValu, The Coca-Cola Company, Nordstrom, Jones Day, Whole Foods, Magnolia Advanced Materials, LAZ Parking, The Men's Wearhouse, Voya Financial, Aon, Which Wich Superior Sandwiches, Comcast Cable, Macy's, Enterprise Rent-a-Car, Booz Allen Hamilton, Allied World Assurance, AmeriFleet Transportation, Hometown Foundation Inc./Dream Ride, and Emory University.

Athlete of the Month: Ryan Phillips

Through Athlete Ryan Phillips' involvement in Special Olympics and trying his very best, he has come so far not only as an athlete, but also as an individual.

After Ryan lost his mother when he was very young, he was withdrawn and unable to be around loud noises and crowds.



But since he turned 11, the Carrollton athlete pushed himself to compete with Special Olympics in softball, basketball, and soccer. Through sports competition and being a part of a team, Ryan began to outgrow his shy demeanor.

Now, Ryan is very social and continues to amaze those around him who have seen him grow into the outgoing and motivational young adult that he is today. In 2010, Ryan travelled to Omaha, NE as a SOGA representative at the National Youth Summit during USA Games. Ryan has attended Special Olympics Georgia Camp Inspire as an athlete and as a Y-LEAD representative. Y-LEAD is mostly comprised of students who do not have intellectual disabilities but want to be agents of change in their schools.

Ryan's hard work as an athlete and an ambassador is how Ryan became what few athletes have the opportunity to become: a college student. Ryan attends Kennesaw State University's Inclusive Academy and lives on campus in a dorm. He is a leader and an incredible inspiration to others. Congratulations, Ryan, for being March's Athlete of the Month!

contact Randy Thompson, Walk Director, at RaThompson@geico.com.

The Georgia Renaissance Festival April 18th-June 7th

The Georgia Renaissance Festival will take place on Saturdays and Sundays April 18th - June 7th. [Use promo code special to purchase tickets at a discounted price:](#) adults \$17.95 (regularly \$22) and children 6-12 \$7 (regularly \$10). In addition, The Georgia Renaissance Festival will donate \$2 per ticket sold to SOGA. Purchase your tickets today at www.garenfest.com.



Color Foam 5K April 25th

We need runners and volunteers to participate in the [Color Foam 5K](#), benefiting



Special Olympics Georgia, April 25th at the Georgia International Horse Park in Conyers. [Click here](#) to sign up to run and use the code OLYMPICS to receive 50% off the registration fee. [Click here](#) for details about volunteering and to sign up.

Duck Pluck August 14th

Adopt a duck in Special Olympics Georgia's [Duck Pluck](#) set for



August 14th at Post Chastain in Atlanta. A quack pack costs \$30 and you'll receive a junior souvenir rubber duck and seven entries in the Duck Pluck. For a donation of \$5, a lucky duck number will be assigned to your duck in your or your loved one's honor. All ducks will be put into the Post Chastain pool for a swim, and if your duck is one of the first plucked, you win! [Click here](#) to learn more about the prizes and for more

Volunteer of the Month: Jordan Naylor

Jordan Naylor started out at Special Olympics as an athlete. He's competed in sports and won many medals and ribbons over the last 14 years.

But when the Cobb County athlete didn't compete this year, he volunteered for State Games instead. His support of children and adults with intellectual disabilities is quite inspiring. Jordan has a phenomenal attitude and he comes to his volunteer shifts ready to serve others. Not only does he motivate his teammates, but he also cultivates community support.



Jordan empowers other Special Olympics athletes to not only reap the benefits of SOGA but to also help as a volunteer. He motivates other SOGA athletes to support their fellow competitors to do their very best and always have a good attitude.

Jordan is a lifelong athlete and a true supporter of Special Olympics Georgia. Congratulations, Jordan, for being March's Volunteer of the Month!

Sponsor of the Month: Platinum Partner of SOGA GEICO

Giving back and making their communities stronger. It may not sound like the work of a large insurance company. It may even sound too serious

for the folks who bring you the quirky commercials and adorable Gecko! At GEICO, however, their commitment to provide outstanding community service is no less than their goal to provide excellent customer service to their policyholders.



For 32 years, GEICO has been a tremendous friend and supporter of Special Olympics Georgia. GEICO's largest regional office in the country is in Macon. That means more than 5,400 local Georgians share the company's admiration for Special Olympics. Every year, GEICO hosts a race/walk to benefit Special Olympics Georgia. Over the years, the events have raised more than \$773,000.

"It's a pleasure for us to say that 100% of the funds collected from entry fees and sponsors go directly to Special Olympics Georgia," says Randy Thompson, GEICO's liability claims director. "The event has no administrative fees because it's run entirely by GEICO volunteers from beginning to end."

"At GEICO, we consider it an honor and a privilege to stand beside and work on behalf of the Special Olympics Organization and the thousands of brave athletes whose efforts inspire us all," says Rhett Rayburn, GEICO Regional Vice President.

Scott Markel, GEICO Regional Vice President, adds that "it is rare in life that you get back more in return than what you put in, but for all of us who participate, we come away better for the effort and proud to be partners in such a great cause."

Thank you GEICO for your continued belief in and dedication to the 26,702 Special Olympics Georgia athletes over the years!

The Jim Mora Count On Me Family Foundation Youth Volunteer Award Winner: Daniel Mercer

information. Thank you to our sponsors Rooms To Go Children's Fund, Kids 'R' Kids Learning Academies, Allconnect, LAZ Parking, Whitaker Oil Company, Atlanta Arms, Highwoods Properties, Dobbins Thrift Shoppe, and Craig Automotive. Also, thank you to Post Apartment Homes and Star 94.

Shoot For Champions September 3rd

Last year, the first Shoot for Champions raised \$30,000 for State Games. Please join us September 3rd at Foxhall Resort. The day will include 15 stations of sporting clays, beautiful scenery, lunch, silent auction, and prizes. Please contact Thomas Ritch for more information.



Bob Busse Memorial Golf Classic November 2nd

Special Olympics Georgia once again proudly hosts the 20th Annual Bob Busse Memorial Golf Classic in honor of long time volunteer Bob Busse, who passed away last year. The tournament will be held at a prestigious golf club November 2nd in Sandy Springs. This event is a great way to spend your Monday! Each year this tournament grows and becomes better than the last. Expect a fun day of golf, prizes, silent auction and a wonderful lunch reception. Email Riley Cerone for more details.



Volunteer Opportunities



Color Foam 5K

Daniel Mercer, a senior at Worth County High School, has been part of Special Olympics programs in Albany all of his life.

Much of his volunteering has been alongside his grandmother and SOGA Coach Marie Stamps. That lifestyle commitment is why Daniel was selected for March's The Jim Mora Count On Me Family Foundation's Youth Volunteer Award.



Even as a tween, Daniel proved himself to be an extraordinary volunteer on road trips with a maturity and intelligence far beyond his years, said Kristin Caso, recreation supervisor of the Albany Recreation and Parks Department. He's helped organize events, and supervise, coach, and chaperone athletes.

"It's all about doing something for someone else; seeing the athletes achieve something they thought was impossible. It's really a feeling you can't describe to anybody," Daniel said recently.

The monthly youth volunteer award recognizes youth that enrich the lives of athletes.

Nominations (including nominator's name and contact information, nominee photo and bio, and a paragraph explaining why the young person should be named The Count On Me Youth Volunteer of the Month) must be emailed to [Wendy Bigham](mailto:Wendy.Bigham) by the 15th of each month.

(In photo above, Daniel is in the center.)

Forward to a Friend

We're fortunate to have you as part of the Special Olympics Georgia family. Our goal is to reach as many potential sponsors, volunteers and athletes as possible, so please help us grow the family even more. Please forward this e-newsletter to your friends and family so they can [sign up](#) to also receive the monthly e-newsletter!



Tell Us Your Story

We want to tell your stories! Email [Wendy Bigham](mailto:Wendy.Bigham) with a story about a Special Olympics event or person who has inspired you! You can also [submit](#) your story online.



April 25th - Conyers Volunteers are needed to represent Special Olympics Georgia at this colorful fun run. [Click here](#) for details and to sign up. If you're interested in volunteering, contact [Morgan Sumner](mailto:Morgan.Sumner).

Web Site Focus Group Do you work in Web design or digital media? We may be looking for you to participate in a Web site focus group to help us decide the next direction of the Special Olympics Georgia Web site. If interested, email [Wendy Bigham](mailto:Wendy.Bigham) by March 12th.

If you are interested in other volunteering opportunities, please contact [Whitney Warren](mailto:Whitney.Warren).

Promotions

There are currently several great ways to earn free money for SOGA athletes. If you have questions on any of these promotions, please contact [Susan Skolnick](mailto:Susan.Skolnick) or 770-414-9390 x111.

Kroger Community Rewards®

Kroger Community Rewards® makes supporting Special Olympics Georgia super easy...[all you have to do is shop at Kroger and swipe your Plus Card!](#) Sign up with your 12 digit Kroger Plus Card number at www.kroger.com/community_rewards, and in the Community Rewards section, select Special Olympics Georgia (code 57973) as the organization you wish to support. Once you're enrolled, you'll earn rewards for Special Olympics Georgia every time you shop and use your Plus Card, and you'll keep earning rewards/fuel points for yourself. [Enroll now for the Kroger Community Rewards Program](#) (you must re-enroll each year to continue earning rewards for SOGA). If your Kroger Plus Card is not already registered online, you will need to create an account. If you already have an



account, simply sign in, find the Community Rewards section, and select Special Olympics Georgia.

AmazonSmile

AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support SOGA every time you shop, at no cost to you. When you shop at smile.amazon.com, you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection, and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price back to SOGA. On your first visit to AmazonSmile, select Special Olympics Georgia to receive donations from eligible purchases before you begin shopping. Then, always shop Amazon through AmazonSmile, and every eligible purchase you make will result in a donation.



Vehicle Donations

Are you thinking of selling or trading in that old car, boat or RV? Why not donate it instead? SOGA has partnered with Car Program, LLC to turn your old vehicle into much needed funds for our athletes. Car Program will make all the arrangements at no cost to you. They handle the title transfer requirements and will provide you with a tax deductible donation receipt when they pick-up your car. Click here to [donate your vehicle](#) and a helpful representative will call you shortly, or you may call our car donation program at (800) 240-0160.



DialAmerica Magazine Subscriptions



Whether renewing your favorite magazine or subscribing to a new one, you can help raise funds for Special Olympics Georgia by ordering through our partner,

DialAmerica. You'll get BIG discounts, and DialAmerica will donate 12.5% of your paid subscription to SOGA. To subscribe, call (877) 872-2362 between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. or [click here](#).

Charity Miles Exercise App

Charity Miles is a free GPS-enabled iPhone and Android compatible app that tracks/logs exercise mileage and allows you to raise money for SOGA athletes. Cyclists earn 10 cents a mile and walkers/runners earn 25 cents a mile. How to use the Charity Miles app:



- * Download the free Charity Miles app from the App Store.
- * Once logged in, swipe until you find Special Olympics and then select it as your charity of choice.
- * Select "Walk," "Run," or "Bike" on the top of the screen.
- * Select "Start" on the bottom of the screen and then run/walk/bike!
- * Once done with your workout, select "Stop" on the bottom of the screen.
- * To complete, select "Finish."
- * If you want, you can post your work out details to Facebook and Twitter by selecting the social media icons on the bottom of the screen.
- * You will be able to see the funds raised for Special Olympics through your exercising.

"Power of Unity" Bangle

Alex and Ani, a made in America lifestyle brand and producer of jewelry, and Special Olympics have



partnered through their Charity by Design division to create a new bangle. The "Power of Unity" bangle will be sold in Alex and Ani retail stores nationwide, online at www.Alexandani.com, and at partnering retail accounts. Alex and Ani will donate to Special Olympics 20% of the purchase

price from each Power of Unity Charm sold between November 2014 and December 2015. The bangle design features the Special Olympics symbol on one side, and the athlete oath on the other side.

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