

HAMILTON COUNTY

**Special
Olympics**
Ohio



Special Olympics Hamilton County TORCHBEARER

SPECIAL THANK YOU EDITION 2018

WHY WE NEED YOUR HELP!

- SOHC is not subsidized by Special Olympics Inc. All funds must be raised locally.
- SOHC serves over 1,800 individuals with intellectual disabilities, and is growing current programs as well as adding new ones.
- SOHC is not funded by the United Way. We rely solely on local donations from individuals and businesses.
- Because our athletes are awesome.
- Because you'll feel good about yourself.
- Because it's the right thing to do.

We couldn't do it without You!

By Anne Knodle

I have been fortunate to be on the Special Olympics Hamilton County (SOHC) Advisory Committee for 10 years, the last two of them as President. During that time we have increased the number of athletes we serve, added sports and programs and enriched the lives of thousands of people with intellectual disabilities. This has required hard work and dedication from our small staff, dozens of community partners and hundreds of volunteers. Our appreciation to all of these people and organizations can scarcely be expressed. We are forever grateful to all of them. But the bottom line (as the headline above suggests) is that without our generous and thoughtful donors, none of this would be possible.



In order to make our programs as accessible as possible to as many participants as possible, we do not charge any fees to our athletes. But as is the case with most things in life, running our organization does cost money. We need to rent facilities, pay our staff, fuel our van, etc. and without the generosity of our donors we would not be able to do any of these things.

So this issue of Torchbearer is devoted to you, our donors. In addition to articles highlighting one of our award-winning athletes, our Gold Medal Sponsor Fifth Third Bank and the outstanding volunteers from UPS, we have listed every organization and individual who supported us in calendar year 2017. We always wish we could do more to thank and recognize you but this is something we can do. This list is a honor roll of those who give selflessly in order to support a cause bigger than themselves. This is the crux altruism and philanthropy. You are vital in making our community a better place and for this we thank you.





June 28th is Special Olympics Hamilton County Night at Great American Ballpark! We'll have an on-field parade of our athletes prior to the game and some of our other Hamilton

County athletes will sing the national anthem and throw out the first pitch!

A portion of your ticket purchase will be

donated to SOHC

(tickets must be

purchased through the link below). So come

join the fun and support

Special Olympics

Hamilton County!

<https://groupmatics.events/event/SpecialOlympics2018>

Ethel Luken Award Winner—Mike Fairbanks

Exceptional athlete honored at Evening for Champions

By: Dave Troup

On May 5th, 2018, I had the privilege of presenting the Ethel Luken Award to my friend and partner Mike Fairbanks. I first met, coached and became friends with Mike in 1985. He was a young man recently graduated from Taft High School and I was a relatively young coach. Mike was arguably one of the most talented players participating in Special Olympics basketball, and I would venture to guess, anywhere in the country.



Mike Fairbanks (c) with Charles Pressley (l) and Dave Troup (r)

He would, over the years, help win multiple Ohio state championships, participate in the Special Olympics international games, and compete successfully in Unified Special Olympics basketball competition. In addition to his success on the basketball court, Mike has demonstrated talent in softball, volleyball, and most recently, bowling. Over the years he has served as a Hamilton County chaperone at the Special Olympics Ohio State Summer Games.

All of the above brings me to the past year. Father time remains undefeated; Mike's knees are no longer what they were more than thirty years ago. However, he remains one of the most talented players on the basketball court. At the same time, he has become an even stronger leader than he was in his younger days, and that is saying a great deal. He encourages all of his teammates, regardless of their varied abilities, and tailors his comments to each individual and their talent level. Mike's reputation and storied career resonates strongly with all of his teammates; despite the fact that our team did not advance to the state tournament I believe that we had a very successful, fun season and Mike was a huge part of our accomplishments.

Ethel Luken was very fond of Mike as a young man and I know that she would be proud to see how much Special Olympics has meant to Mike over the years and, in turn, how much Mike has meant to Special Olympics Hamilton County. I can think of no better ambassador for what Special Olympics is all about!

The Ethel Luken Award is given each year to SOHC athletes who exemplify teamwork, courage, and positive attitude, characteristics Ethel valued and exhibited throughout her life. Ethel Luken was the Executive Director SOHC from 1971-1995.

Community Partner—Fifth Third Bank

Fifth Third Bank has long been known for its support of worthy local causes and for the last decade, one of those causes has been Special Olympics Hamilton County. Through its sponsorship of our Corporate Olympics and annual spring fundraising gala it has provided vital support to our athletes and programs.

“Our relationship with Special Olympics began when I was contacted by Nathan Michelson, who is an SOHC athlete,” says Mitch Morgan, Vice President of Inclusion and Diversity at Fifth Third. “It just seemed like a natural fit. Fifth Third Bank has a long history of providing job skills training to individuals with disabilities that leads to competitive employment at the Bank or in the community. To support an organization like SOHC, which also provides training in competitive sports and activities, is an honor because of the benefit to the athlete and the benefit to the communities in which we serve.”

Once again this year, Fifth Third was a Gold Medal sponsor of Evening for Champions and is the Presenting Sponsor of the SOHC Corporate Olympics.

Thanks so much to Fifth Third Bank for their ongoing support!

Volunteer Spotlight—UPS

Nearly a decade ago, a group of UPS employees took it upon themselves to organize a Unified Basketball League for Special Olympics Hamilton County. They recruited coaches, bought uniforms, created schedules all for the sake of SOHC athletes. Later they began volunteering for the annual SOHC Bowling Tournament and UPS has been a stalwart supporter ever since.

Volunteerism is a strong recurring theme at what is one of the county’s most well-known delivery services. According to Mary Beth Wiehe of UPS, “We find that any volunteer who has participated (with SOHC) in the past comes back the next year and brings someone else.”

“They are just one of those organizations we know we can always count on,” says SOHC Program Director Janet Smith. “Anytime we need them to do something they are always ready to do it. It really says a lot about the kind of people they employ—hard working, dedicated and reliable.”

It may be fair to also describe them as quite competitive as once again this year they will be sponsoring a team for the Cincinnati Corporate Olympics. Since the inception of the event more than 20 years ago, UPS has sent out some of their best and bravest to throw down against other area businesses in the fun-filled competition that benefits SOHC.





FC Cincinnati will be hosting Special Olympics Hamilton County at the August 4th game vs. Nashville. Tickets are specially priced for our supporters (and must be purchased via the link below). A portion of all tickets sales goes to support SOHC.

Go to fccincinnati.com/group.portal and enter the promo code OLYMPICS or call 513-977-KICK to purchase tickets.

Deadline for purchase is July 27th.

Our Proud Champions

Special Olympics Hamilton County wishes to acknowledge and thank all of our 2017 supporters. We are pleased to present our list of all individuals and organizations that made financial contributions between January 1, 2017 and December 31 2017.

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Connect With Us!

Mailing Address
4790 Red Bank Expressway
Suite 260
Cincinnati, OH 45227

Phone
(513) 271-2606

Fax
(513) 271-2631

Website
www.specialolympics-hc.org

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