

HAMILTON COUNTY

**Special
Olympics**
Ohio



Special Olympics Hamilton County **TORCHBEARER**

SPECIAL THANK YOU EDITION 2019

Passing the Torch

By Janet Smith

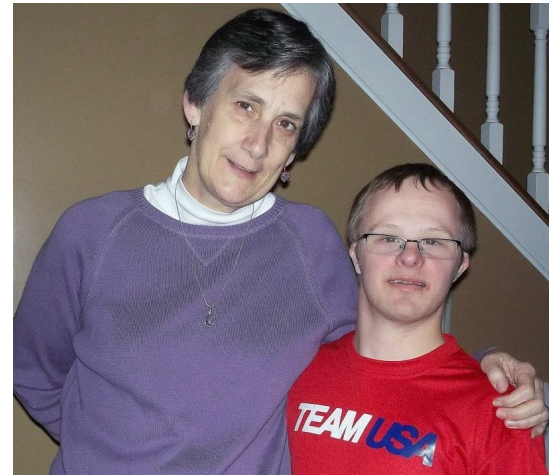
When I graduated from college in 1976, I began teaching at the Adult Workshops through Hamilton County DDS. On my first day, one of the staff, Mike Schen, came to me and asked if I would be interested in helping with the Special Olympics Program he ran for the individuals at the workshop. Even though I went to school for Special Education, I had never heard of Special Olympics. But, it was a sports organization and I like sports so I said, "Yes!" And the rest is history.

While at the Workshop, I helped coach whatever sports the athletes were interested in – gymnastics, softball, basketball, skiing, just to name a few. Through my volunteering with Special Olympics, I was asked to sit on the SOHC Advisory Committee. From there, a position for a full-time assistant to the Executive Director, Ethel Luken, became available and I was asked if I was interested in the position. Of course, I again said "Yes"! I started working for SOHC in October of 1987. In 1993, Ethel decided it was time to retire so I was asked to take over as the Director. As I always say, it is the best of both worlds. I am able to organize the sports activities for the individuals and then go out and watch them show everyone what they CAN DO!

As of July 31, 2019, I will be retiring from my position as Program Director with SOHC. I am excited to be "Passing the Torch" on to Lindsay Bartsch, who will become the Program Director (currently the Assistant Program Director) and Ken Coggeshall, the Director of Marketing and Fundraising. They will continue to keep the "flame burning" so that our athletes can continue to be the best they can be!

It has been a pleasure and a privilege to have worked for Special Olympics Hamilton County. I have met so many wonderful people over the years. I cannot thank everyone enough for the support you have given me over the years. I sincerely want to thank everyone for giving of their "Time, Talents and Treasures" to the athletes of SOHC.

The current staff, Grace Ward, Lindsay and Ken, along with the staff members that came before them, thank you for your dedication to provide quality programs to our athletes.



Janet Smith (l) with athlete Robbie Knodle

Continued on page 3



July 20th 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/SpecialOlympics2019>

Or call 513-271-2606

Community Partner—Hillcrest Academy

Hillcrest Academy is a residential facility offering educational, vocational training and normalized high school experience for at-risk youth. Last year, SOHC began partnering with Hillcrest as a means of connecting their students with SOHC athletes. Hillcrest students earn the privilege of volunteering with our athletes, assisting them in a variety of activities. It is a partnership benefitting both organizations. SOHC athletes receive personalized attention while Hillcrest students reap the rewards of helping others.

According to Stephan Tisher of Hillcrest, "Our relationship with SOHC has truly enhanced our culture here at Hillcrest Academy. From basketball and motor skills to our sports days, SOHC provides opportunities for our youth to help work toward what Eunice Kennedy Shriver once described as, 'a community with respect, hope and happiness.'"

Hillcrest Academy is operated by Rite of Passage, a leading provider of evidence-based therapeutic and educational programs for youth. Rite of Passage provides a diverse continuum of care with evidence-based programs in education, youth shelter programs, family and community aftercare and intensive treatment for youth involved in the juvenile justice system.



Volunteer Spotlight—Carrie Strawser

In the eight years that Carrie Strawser has been a volunteer at SOHC, there isn't much she hasn't done. She has coached volleyball and swimming, has been a Unified Bowling Partner, has pitched in at swim meets, golf outings, tennis tournaments, fundraisers as well as the 2014 and 2018 USA games. And oh yeah, when called upon she will come in to the SOHC office and help with mailings, data entry, t-shirt sorting—anything that is needed. All of this she does with enthusiasm and an easy laugh.

"After I retired I just wanted to find a way that I could help people out who needed it," says Carrie. "After my first experience with the SOHC athletes, I absolutely fell in love."



Carrie Strawser, r, with SOHC athlete Jill Frambes

Carrie is now planning to move on to a new life in Columbus, Ohio but our hearts and thanks for her years of dedication go with her. She won't be too far away, so hopefully we'll see her again soon!

Thanks Carrie!

Passing the Torch (continued from page 1)

Donors, as you know, we cannot charge our athletes to participate, so it is because of YOUR generosity that we can keep the programs running for our athletes.

Volunteers, whether you are a “day of” (i.e., Bowling, Spring Games) volunteer, a coach, an assistant coach, it is because of YOU that our athletes are able to train and to compete.

Committee Members – Advisory Committee, Program, Fundraising, Young Professionals – thank YOU for helping the staff to continue to bring quality events to the athletes through your input and helping to raise monies for the programs.

Teachers, it is because of YOU that many of our school-aged individuals get to experience sports programs that they might not otherwise get to participate in.

Parents/Caregivers/Friends of the athletes, it is because of YOU that our athletes are able to get to their training sessions and competitions.

Athletes, YOU are the reason that I love my job. I want to thank all of YOU for allowing me to be part of your life. I will always cherish your friendship.

I may be retiring as a Staff member of SOHC but I won't be retiring as a volunteer. I will look forward to seeing everyone at some point out on the playing field!



Left—2018 Polar Bear Plunge, (l to r) Kim Schobert, Kassey Willis, Janet Smith and Sheryl Fairbanks

Below left—Janet with the 2018 USA Games SOHC Team



Above—Janet literally passes the torch to Lindsay and Ken



FC Cincinnati will be hosting Special Olympics Hamilton County at the September 21st game vs. Chicago. Tickets are specially priced for our supporters (and must be purchased via the link below).

Go to fccincinnati.com/group.portal and enter the promo code OLYMPICS19 or call 513-977-KICK to purchase tickets.

Deadline for purchase is August 21st.

[See you there!](#)

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But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.

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