

Team Waban Triumphs at Special Olympics

On Friday morning, June 10th a VIP coach bus, a 12-passenger van, and several other vehicles pulled out of Waban's Main Campus en route to the 2016 Special Olympic Summer Games in Orono, Maine. 21 athletes and 18 staff couldn't contain their excitement thinking about what the coming weekend had in store.

Almost three hours later, the bus pulled into the Bangor-Brewer Bowling Lanes, in Brewer, Maine, just in time for the first event of the weekend: Traditional Singles Bowling and Unified Team Bowling. Waban's Chris Heywood took home the Gold in the Ramp Division for Traditional Singles Bowling! After collecting their medals and ribbons the team piled back onto the bus and arrived at their final destination, the University of Maine at Orono.

Athletes and staff settled into their rooms in Knox Hall and then headed off to the quad to watch the Parade of Athletes while enjoying a picnic-like dinner. Police and K-9 units, motorcycles, fire trucks, marching bands and more from all over the state, paraded through the streets leading the way for the Special Olympic participants to follow. The teams were announced as they made their way into the stadium while footage of the parade of athletes was displayed on the jumbotron. As athletes took their seats in the stadium bleachers, the Orono Police Department arrived with the Flame of Hope and lit the official torch symbolizing the start of the 2016 Special Olympic Summer Games.

One of our very own, Amy Reinholdtsen, was once again honored to present the Volunteer Award in her grandfather's name during the Opening Ceremony. After the opening remarks, Amy's presentation, and countless well wishes from Special Olympic board members, Miss Maine America Marybeth Noonan, led the 1,500 athletes, their staff, friends, and family in the Olympic Oath.

The next morning the athletes were back at the field bright and early ready to participate in the day's events. Waban athletes participated in the Softball Throw, Shotput, the 50, 100, and 200 Meter Run, and Standing Long Jump and several came away with medals. Lunch was provided to the athletes on the field as well as crafts, exercise activities, and games for the athletes waiting for their next event or for those who finished competing for the weekend.

The athletes said it was wonderful to have the support of the staff and friends, but the biggest cheerleaders were the families that came to watch their sons and daughters, and sisters and brothers compete.

Saturday night was a reprieve for the athletes although that didn't stop them from breaking it down on the dance floor in the Alford Arena or visiting one of the halls for a late night movie showing. Accompanying staff reported that all of the athletes had a blast dancing with familiar friends from around the state and introducing themselves to new friends. Turning in a little earlier than they may have wanted, the athletes got some

rest before heading back out to the field the next morning to participate in or cheer on the athletes in the walking events.

Due to stormy weather, unfortunately, our athletes' trip was cut a little short as they pushed back some of the events because of the rain. After the last member received their ribbon and medal, everyone rounded up to head home.

All in all, the weekend held much happiness, friendly competition, and memories that Waban's athletes will remember forever. Look at Waban's Facebook page to see some great images of the athletes in action.



Caption (Harold and Kevin SO 2016): Longtime Special Olympics volunteer and past Waban employee Harold Cebulla reconnects with Waban Special Olympics athlete Kevin Eldridge at Orono's Harold Alford Sports Stadium for the 2016 Summer Games. Photo Waban Staff



Caption (Chris Gold Medal SO 2016): Gold Medalist Chris Heywood cheers after receiving his medal in front of the podiums at the 2016 Special Olympics Summer Games. Photo Waban Staff