

# Special Olympics Illinois athlete Tony Hill walks on water

by Katy Clendenen  
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CARLYLE – Tony Hill is a Special Olympics Illinois athlete from Belleville who has been all over the world, but what he is looking forward to the most this year is plunging at Carlyle Lake on February 25, 2017. This will be the fourth time that Tony has taken the icy dip, but he has been an athlete for much longer. He is one of the first wheelchair bound athletes to take the plunge. After his last plunge, Tony joked, “It was so cold I could have gotten up and walked on water!”

Tony started participating in Special Olympics in 1974. His favorite event to participate in is bowling. While Tony bowls, he is just like everyone else, even being restricted to his wheelchair. His experiences however, are not so ordinary. Special Olympics has given Tony the opportunity to meet several different important people and many different experiences. He has met President Bill Clinton, Vanessa Williams, Nadia Comaneci, the Prime Minister of China and the Founder of Special Olympics, Eunice Kennedy Shriver.

This year Tony and his five Special Olympics teammates and coaches will take the plunge together representing the Southern Illinois Grasshoppers (Belleville). They have a team goal of raising over \$500 and Tony encourages all other Special Olympics Illinois athletes to try to plunge because of the enjoyment the event brings. His excitement for the plunge is evident, and he hopes the weather is pleasant, but cold enough to be Polar Plunge weather. His favorite part of the Polar Plunge is raising money and seeing all the people rush into the cold water.

When asked about how he would encourage other athletes to participate in the Polar Plunge and Special Olympics, he responded, “Have confidence in yourself. Have a positive attitude even when you win or lose. Salute your opponent and give it your all. Even if you lose, keep trying and encourage others around you.” He urges people to come out to the Polar Plunge even if they are not plunging, as they can always cheer on and support those who are. This event is always a great time!

The Polar Plunge and 5k Donut Dash is on February 25, 2017 at Carlyle Lake in Carlyle, Illinois. This year is the first year for the 5k Donut Dash beginning at 9:30 AM (8:30 AM registration) before the plunge begins at noon. Register for the 2017 Polar Plunge and 5k Donut Dash at [www.plungeillinois.com](http://www.plungeillinois.com) and help support athletes like Tony on their journey with Special Olympics.

Special Olympics Illinois is a not-for-profit organization offering year-round training and competition in 19 sports for nearly 23,000 traditional athletes with intellectual disabilities and nearly 21,000 Young Athletes ages 2-7 with and without intellectual disabilities. Special Olympics transforms the lives of people with intellectual disabilities, allowing them to realize their full potential in sports and in life. Special Olympics programs enhance physical fitness, motor skills, self-confidence, social skills and encourage family and community support. If you are interested in learning more about Special Olympics Illinois, volunteering or providing financial support to help make Special Olympics programs possible, contact Area Director, Justin Dunning at [jdunning@soill.org](mailto:jdunning@soill.org) or call 618-654-6680.





