

Edwardsville, other area teams compete in Special Olympics Spring Games

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
May 3 2015 12:15 PM





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

Those are the words participants in the Illinois Area 12 Special Olympics recited during the opening ceremony of the organization's Spring Games, which took place at Korte Stadium on the Southern Illinois-Edwardsville campus Saturday.

The event, which featured approximately 30 teams from Clinton, Jersey, Madison, St. Clair and Monroe counties, also served as a qualifying event for the state Special Olympics, set for June 12-14 throughout the Bloomington-Normal area.

The Edwardsville School District had 16 representatives taking part in Saturday's event, and participants practiced for about a month prior to competing. For the first time, the entire district had representatives taking part in Saturday's games.

“In the past, we had just one school (Cassens Elementary) who was taking part,” said Adam Garrett, special education coordinator for the Edwardsville School District. “This year, we decided to enter as a school district to give more kids a chance to take part in the Olympics.”

“They've practiced for a month to get ready, and they're all really excited to be here today. It gives them a chance to show everyone what they can do.”

The Special Olympics were founded in 1968 as part of the Joseph P. Kennedy Foundation by Eunice Kennedy Shriver as an offshoot of a day camp she held, beginning in 1962, to give a chance for the intellectually challenged a chance to take part in physical activity. The movement has grown into a worldwide organization, complete with Winter and Summer World Games held as the same cycle as the Winter and Summer Olympic Games. The next Summer World Games are set for July 25-Aug. 2 in Los Angeles, site of the 1932 and 1984 Summer Olympics, while the next Winter World Games are set for March 14-24, 2017, in Graf-Salzburg, Austria.

Saturday's event included an Olympic-style opening ceremony with a parade of athletes, the lighting of the cauldron (called the Flame of Hope) and an athlete's oath. The torch was carried a lap around the Korte Stadium track, with torchbearers accompanied by members of regional law-enforcement agencies.

Josh Fark served as the coach of the Edwardsville team and he was pleased with how the day turned out. “It went very well,” Fark said. “We had several participants who qualified for the state games and everyone had a great time.

“The organizers really went all out for us, and the spectators who were there really applauded everyone who took part.”

As this was the first time Edwardsville had fielded an all-school team, Fark hopes that the program continues to grow. “It was our first year with a team from all the schools,” Fark said, “but we're hoping it will continue to grow.”









