



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Let the Games Begin!

Special Olympics Michigan State Summer Games will have highest athlete turnout since 2005

(MT. PLEASANT, Mich.) – We two weeks away from the largest Special Olympics Michigan event of the year! The **2016 State Summer Games presented by SpartanNash** takes place on the campus of Central Michigan University in Mount Pleasant from **Thursday, June 2 through Saturday, June 4.**

More than 2,800 Special Olympics athletes from nearly all 83 counties in Michigan, along with 3,400 coaches, volunteers, chaperones, family members and spectators will take part in this year's Games – all while experiencing inclusion, unity, acceptance, respect, dignity, friendship and joy! The 2,817 total athletes this year marks the highest athlete turnout since 2005. Athletes competing at the State Summer Games qualified through competitions held at the local level at various locations across the state.

The Flame of Hope will be lit at **10 a.m. on Thursday, June 2 on the Capitol steps in Lansing** with a special Law Enforcement Torch Run® (LETR) ceremony. LETR members will then spend the next nine hours running in relay style to light the cauldron at the Opening Ceremony, which begins at 6:30 p.m. at Kelly/Shorts Stadium on the campus of Central Michigan University.

We invite you to be a cheer volunteer for the Opening Ceremony and Parade of Athletes on Thursday, June 2 or during athlete competition on Friday, June 3 and Saturday, June 4! There is no charge for admission.

A complete event schedule can be found on the [State Summer Games page](#) at SOMI.org. You can also download the “2016 SOMI State Summer Games” app for free from the App Store and Google Play Store. The app includes interactive schedules, maps, venue information, competition results, social media feeds, photos and more!

Here are some of the highlights planned for this year:

- Our Presenting and Premier Statewide Gold Medal Sponsor SpartanNash is back to celebrate a 32-year partnership! SpartanNash supports athletes, provides volunteers and feeds hundreds of volunteers throughout the Games.





- The seventh annual “Rev It Up Ride” returns with motorcycle riders from all across Michigan converging on Mt. Pleasant. Many of them are members of the Michigan Moose Association but anyone is welcome to participate by paying the entry fee. The ride raises funds for Special Olympics Michigan. An autograph session will take place at Kelly/Shorts Stadium Friday, June 3 from 6:30 – 7 p.m. before the start of the Closing Ceremony.
- This year marks the 32nd anniversary for Michigan Law Enforcement Torch Run® (LETR). The annual Capitol Steps Torch Lighting Ceremony will be Thursday, June 2 at 10 a.m. on the main steps of the Capitol building in Lansing. The public is welcome to attend! LETR members will light the torch with an athlete. Then 14 LETR members will each run a five mile stretch during the next nine hours from the Capitol in Lansing to Mt. Pleasant, in relay style, leading up to Opening Ceremony that night at 6:30 p.m.
- The 2015 Inspirational Athlete of the Year Cody Florey from Monroe will have the honor of running the last leg of the torch run in Kelly/Shorts Stadium to light the Flame of Hope at the Opening Ceremony. He will be presented with a running jacket at Closing Ceremony from the Law Enforcement Torch Run® and become an honorary member. The 2016 Inspirational Athlete of the Year will be announced during Closing Ceremony.
- Our 2015 SpartanNash Healthy Athlete of the Year Ben Dornoff from Traverse City will lead the Athlete Oath at the Opening Ceremony. Ben will also be present at the Celebrity Autograph Signing. He is featured on the Spartan Brand packages of bottled water. The 2016 SpartanNash Healthy Athlete of the Year will be announced during the Opening Ceremony.
- We will have an athlete Prince and Princess from each of our 36 area programs. The King and Queen of the 2016 State Summer Games will be drawn from the 12-member court and announced at the Closing Ceremony.
- The Healthy Athletes® Village provides free health screenings to all athletes. This year it includes Opening Eyes®, Special Smiles®, Healthy Hearing, MedFest®, Fit Feet, Health Promotions, FUNFitness, MICHIP, Strive and SpartanNash’s “To Your Good Life.”
- We are offering the Young Athletes™ Program on Friday, June 3 from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., and on Saturday, June 4 from 11 a.m. to Noon at McGuirk Arena. The Young Athletes™ Program introduces children ages 2-7 to Special Olympics Michigan, before they become eligible to compete at age eight.
- On Thursday, June 2 from 1:00-4:45 p.m. Project UNIFY® will bring together bocce and bowling athletes from Project UNIFY® Schools to participate in Unified tournaments, which feature athletes with and without intellectual disabilities competing together. The locations of each tournament are bocce at the bocce courts (CMU Field Hockey Field) and bowling at the SAC. Students are empowered to be leaders in their schools and educate their peers about diversity, anti-bullying and respect. Special Olympics Project UNIFY® is a school-based project that uses sports and education programs to activate young people to develop school communities where all youth are agents of change - fostering respect, dignity and advocacy for people with intellectual disabilities. Special Olympics Michigan is excited to finish our 6th year with the program. This year, more than 170 schools and over 3,500 students participated in Project UNIFY® in Michigan. To learn more about Project UNIFY®, visit SOMI.org/projectunify.





High resolution photos from the 2015 State Summer Games presented by SpartanNash can be viewed/downloaded from Flickr:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/specialolympicsmichigan/albums>

Photos from the 2016 State Summer Games presented by SpartanNash will be posted on [Facebook](#) and [Flickr](#) the week of the Games. And if you Tweet, be sure to use the hashtag #SOMISG.

This year's sponsors and partners include:

Statewide Premier Gold Medal Sponsor and State Summer Games Presenting Sponsor: SpartanNash

Statewide Gold Medal Sponsor: Real Estate One

Statewide Silver Medal Sponsor: Amerisure

Statewide Bronze Medal Sponsors: Amway, Sam's Club, FCA Foundation on behalf of FIAT USA

Statewide Civic Sponsors: Law Enforcement Torch Run, Knights of Columbus, Wertz Warriors and Water Warriors

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Summer Games Bronze Partners: Central Michigan University and Inspired Concepts

Summer Games Team Partners: Kurek Tool, Inc., Labelle Management, Manitowoc, and Olivieri Homes

Summer Games Event Partners: Soaring Eagle Water Park and Hotel, Sound Productions, Weichert Realtors/Broadway Realty

About Special Olympics Michigan

Special Olympics Michigan Inc. (SOMI) provides year-round sports training and athletic competition for 23,317 children and adults with intellectual disabilities. Athletes build physical fitness, develop self-confidence and prepare for participation in society. SOMI is a non-profit organization supported almost entirely by corporate and individual gifts. The generosity of Michigan organizations, individuals and statewide businesses enable the program to continue.



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