



## All-round talent



Steven Ramlose – remember the name; because chances are you'll hear it a lot in the future.

In fact if you have been to a Special Olympics sports event you have probably met Steven in person.

This talented athlete from Special Olympics Howick-Pakuranga is something of an 'all-rounder'. While his main sports are swimming, basketball and football he has a go at anything and is usually very successful in his endeavours.

Last year he won the ASB College Sport Young Sports Person of the Year Award for Athlete with a Disability – an impressive achievement considering students from more than 100 Auckland schools were in contention for the award. He also won a raft of awards from his own school, Alfriston College, including the Special Olympics Cup and the Most Valuable Player for Special Olympics.

"Steven had quite a successful year last year," jokes Dave Beattie, Upper North Island South and East regional sports coordinator.

"He is a very active, gifted and talented athlete. I believe he is a definite contender for the 2015 World Summer Games."

Go Steven!

## From the CEO's desk

Welcome to our first newsletter for 2011! I hope you all enjoyed a relaxing summer break with family and friends. We have a busy year ahead with the resumption of regular sports training and competition and the forthcoming World Summer Games in Athens in June.

I have just returned from a very productive Asia Pacific Regional Conference in Singapore. Following the launch of the Global Strategic Plan in late 2010, all Special Olympics Programmes have been collectively aligning their own future planning. While our Asia Pacific region is very diverse culturally and in size and scale there are common themes regarding athlete development, strengthening our communities and raising awareness. I value every opportunity to explore 'best practice' so that we don't reinvent the wheel. This will ensure that we can improve our quality service delivery to our athletes and the network of dedicated volunteers that support them while delivering our stakeholder requirements. Our board has been augmenting our own strategic plan as we look towards 2015 drawing on the relevant elements in the Global Plan and adapting these to our own environment. The board meets again on 23rd/24th February to complete the final elements of this process.

I know our athletes look forward to getting back into their active sports training and reconnecting with their Special Olympics friends. Train hard and have fun!

*Kathy Gibson, Chief Executive Officer*

# 4 months to the WORLD SUMMER GAMES

## Showcasing our Summer Games talent

Fancy a trip to Greece to see the opening ceremony of the 13th Special Olympics World Summer Games on 25 June?

Special Olympics New Zealand sponsor Provender is offering its customers this wonderful opportunity.

"The Summer Games is a huge event on the sports calendar and New Zealand has 36 athletes attending this event. We wanted a way to showcase the Games and Special Olympics New Zealand's talent," says Philip Horrocks, director of Provender – Australia & New Zealand.

The company, which operates vending machines, coffee machines and office 'snack boxes' around New Zealand, has decided to send people directly to the action in Athens.

From now until the end of May Provender is running a competition at all its 10,000 locations across New Zealand to raise awareness of Special Olympics New Zealand and the Summer Games. The main prize includes a trip for two to Greece for eight days with €1000 as spending money ... and of



course, tickets to the opening ceremony of the Summer Games.

"We are immensely proud of our athletes and we're looking forward to offering more New Zealanders the opportunity to learn about our organisation and participate in the Summer Games through this promotion," says Kathy Gibson, chief executive officer of Special Olympics New Zealand.

"Provender has been a sponsor of Special Olympics New Zealand for a decade. In co-branding with this promotion we are putting Special Olympics New Zealand in front of more than 300,000 people."

To find out more about our Summer Games team check out [www.specialolympics.org.nz](http://www.specialolympics.org.nz) and look out for upcoming editions of *Fanletter* in which we'll be profiling our team members.

# Queenstown officially joins the Special Olympics fold!

Queenstown is the gateway to Special Olympics New Zealand's many winter sports and, most recently, equestrian and bowls events. Now the area has its very own club.

Special Olympics Queenstown Lakes was set up at the end of 2010 and has quickly grown from a small committee of three to a membership of 28. Not bad considering the club has yet to be officially launched.

"We have made very fast progress," says Jan Aitken, regional sports coordinator for the Lower South Island. "We called for expressions of interest in August last year. A meeting was called and more than 20 people turned up, which is unheard of – parents, students, teachers, community members, the media. From there everything fell into place."

Lizzie Christopher, a teacher aide at Wakatipu High School, is chair of the

new club; supported by actress Caroline Hutchison as secretary and accountant Jo Wright as treasurer. Wakatipu High School sports coordinator Edwin John is the club's head coach and Lakes Leisure swim school coordinator Sian Waite is aquatics coach.

"We are very lucky where we are that we have all these amazing facilities and locations for events – and a very supportive community," says Lizzie Christopher.

Support has come from around the Queenstown Lakes area with local community members and media promoting the club and Remarkables Primary School offering its new facilities for training and events.

As well as donating her time, Caroline Hutchison raised more than \$800 for the Club through her recent performance of Oscar Wilde's *The Selfish Giant*.

"It's great to bring our small diverse community together like this," says Caroline whose son Amos is a Special Olympics athlete. "The children are making friends and feel great!"

The club is open to all members of the Queenstown Lakes community – Special Olympics athletes, their families and friends and members of the public.

"We are aiming for a year-long training programme for people of all ages and abilities. So far we offer training in athletics and aquatics. In winter we'll have alpine skiing and snowboarding on offer and equestrian, football and indoor bowls are also in the pipeline," says Lizzie.

So if you're in the area, come and join the Special Olympics Queenstown Lakes Club!



## Reconnect with us

You may have been wondering where our Facebook page was over Christmas – inexplicably, it decided to have a holiday and disappeared from the site. But fear not friends – our page is now back and better than ever. So please reconnect with us. Simply log in to Facebook, check out our page and click 'like'. We'll then keep you updated with all upcoming events and news about our athletes. We look forward to seeing you soon.

## Row, row, row your boat to raise \$10,000

Congratulations to the AsureQuality team in Christchurch who rowed their way to success at its Row-A-Thon, raising \$10,000 for Special Olympics World Summer Games basketballers Mike Friend and Craig Bennett.

Held in Christchurch's City Mall in December, the event was organised by work colleagues of Al Robson who is the head coach for Special Olympics New Zealand's World Summer Games basketball team.

Around 40 volunteers from AsureQuality, Canterbury Basketball, major sponsors and some former Tall Blacks took part in the event, which involved rowing 100 kilometres in a specific timeframe. While they rowed (on 'ergs') other volunteers collected donations from members of the public.

"We ended up rowing just over 150 kilometres in the allotted time; so we thrashed the 100 kilometre target, which was an excellent effort," says Al.

"We also had a few guest rowers come along including Gary Endicott (son of rugby league coach Frank). He has cerebral palsy and has completed the New York Marathon four times and climbed Mount



From left – Daniel McGregor (AsureQuality); Al Robson (AsureQuality and Special Olympics New Zealand World Games basketball coach); Will Petersen (AsureQuality and fundraiser organiser); Russell McGregor (AsureQuality); Steve Muscroft-Taylor (AsureQuality); Rebecca Doubleday (AsureQuality); Bruce Martin (Canterbury Basketball and Special Olympics New Zealand World Games basketball referee); Sam Brooks (AsureQuality and fundraiser organiser)

Kilimanjaro. He is an amazing character and was a great inspiration for all of us who met him.

"Mike Friend and Craig Bennett were both there of course and everyone enjoyed meeting and socialising with them – I think Craig may have picked up a few sales techniques too!"

From everyone at Special Olympics New Zealand – and Mike and Craig – thank you AsureQuality!



## Hip, hip, hooray

Congratulations to Special Olympics New Zealand supporters John Holdsworth and Lois Aitkenhead who were recognised in the New Year honours.

John Holdsworth, chairman of Datacom, was made an officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit in recognition for his services to business and the community. John has been an active supporter of Special Olympics New Zealand for many years leading fundraising initiatives.

Lois Aitkenhead was awarded the Queen's Service Medal for services to the community. Based in Nelson, the former special needs teacher began working with Special Olympics New Zealand through the Lioness Club. Her involvement with Special Olympics Nelson began as the 'Christmas Fairy' and she now heads the club, is chair of the Upper South Island Regional Council and sits on Special Olympics New Zealand's Board of Trustees.

Congratulations also to Jo Richards and Wayne Millicich from Special Olympics Howick-Pakuranga who were finalists in the Counties Manukau Sport Sporting Excellence Awards held last December.

Jo, who has coached the Special Olympics Howick-Pakuranga swimming team for the past 16 years, won a Service to Sports award. Wayne was a finalist for the Coach of the Year award after leading the Howick-Pakuranga bowling team to win gold and bronze Medals at the Special Olympics National Summer Games in 2009. One of his team members, William Burr, is heading to the World Summer Games in June.

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## Meet Special Olympics' new "sport nut"

Introducing Mike Freeman, Special Olympics New Zealand's new community network manager – and a self-confessed "sport nut".

"Anything that involves moving and competing – football, basketball, netball, rugby league, rugby – I'm interested in it," he says.

Mike joined Special Olympics New Zealand's head office last month and is working closely with our eight regional sports managers to coordinate programmes for schools and clubs.

It's a role he's well suited to. Trained as a special education teacher, Mike has worked with a range of athletes in schools, most recently at Rongotai College in Wellington where he



spent a year teaching students with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities. Prior to that role Mike ran Massey University's development and alumni relations unit and was fundraising and communications manager for Wesley Wellington Mission, a not-for-profit organisation focused on at-risk youth and their families.

Mike is enthusiastic about his new position. "This is an exciting place to be. The organisation offers great opportunities for all involved. It really opens doors into life-long communities. Everyone is very skilled and passionate about what they do."

## Farewell Sargent Shriver

Last month Special Olympics lost its patriarch Robert Sargent Shriver Jr. The 95-year-old died on 19 January in Maryland, USA surrounded by his family.

Husband to Special Olympics' founder Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Sargent Shriver was chairman of the board emeritus of Special Olympics and served as president of the Special Olympics movement between 1984 and 1996 and as chairman of the Board of Directors from 1990 to 2003. The Shriver's son Timothy took over as CEO and president in 1996.

Part of Shriver's legacy within Special Olympics is the Sargent Shriver International Global Messenger programme in which athletes are selected to represent Special Olympics on the national and international stage and promote the organisation's spirit of "peace and unity across the world".

"Sargent Shriver was an inspirational man who gave so willingly so that others may achieve their dreams and aspirations. His legacy will live on through the voices of our athlete leaders," says Kathy Gibson, chief executive officer of Special Olympics New Zealand.



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