



Welcome to the San Mateo County Aquatics Team of the Special Olympics

Special Olympics is an international organization dedicated to empowering individuals with mental retardation to become physically fit, productive and respected members of society through sports training and competition. Special Olympics offers children and adults with mental retardation year-round training and competition in **26 Olympic-type summer and winter sports**. There is no charge to participate in Special Olympics.

Special Olympics currently serves more than 1 million persons with mental retardation in **more than 200 Programs** in more than 150 countries. Children and adults with mental retardation who participate in Special Olympics develop improved physical fitness and motor skills, greater self-confidence and a more positive self-image. They grow mentally, socially and spiritually and, through their activities, exhibit boundless courage and enthusiasm, enjoy the rewards of friendship and ultimately discover not only new abilities and talents but "their voices" as well.

Special Olympics in Half Moon Bay is growing each year. We currently offer basketball, tennis, and swimming. Each sport is coached entirely by volunteers. The Special Olympics Aquatic program is a huge favorite here in Half Moon Bay. We have many athletes that can not participate in other sports due to physical limitations. Swimming is something that most can do. Athletes practice from January until May. We have our first swim meet in May where swimmers compete in events such as water walking, assisted swims, and floatation swims. Other athletes compete in events such as 25 yard butterfly, 50 yard backstroke, and 100 yard freestyle! We then move on to a qualifying meet in Oakland. A first place win at this meet lands you a spot on the Summer Games Team. Last year we had 8 athletes qualify for Summer Games and brought home 3 gold medals!

We could not run this team without volunteers and, of course, a pool. We have a crew of very dedicated volunteers and are always looking for more. During our first season we held practice at the outdoor high school pool. We lost our space there the following year and were about to lose the entire program. On a whim we called the Ritz/Colony Club, who welcomed us with open arms! And our program flourished because we had a warm indoor pool! Thanks to the Ritz's generosity, we again have a home this year. We meet every Tuesday night from 6:30-7:30 pm. We are working on building strength, endurance, and swimming skills and having so much fun doing it! It is an incredibly rewarding experience for all involved, one that we hope to continue for years to come.