

My Brother Knights and Ladies:

I would like to start by first thanking you for your continued support of Special Olympics and the various programs and events that we, as Knights, do for the Special Olympians throughout Ontario.

The Knights of Columbus have had a long-standing relationship with Special Olympics, which started from the very beginning when the Knights helped Brother Knight Sargent Shriver, co-founder of the Special Olympics, along with his wife Eunice Kennedy Shriver, organize the very first event in Chicago in 1968.

This support for Special Olympics continues today during which more than 74,000 Knights order wide volunteered over 268,000 hours of their time at more than 10,000 Special Olympics events last year. This is one of the most popular charitable activities of the Order, with more than 3,600 Councils providing support to Special Olympics and donating more than \$3.3 million. Since 1980 the combined contributions from the Knights of Columbus at all levels has totaled over \$500 million.

Over the years, the Ontario Knights have also been strong supporters of Special Olympics, which was recognized by our being ranked, order wide, the 3rd most active jurisdiction, in both volunteer hours and donations made to Special Olympics. This ranking was based on the results of the Partnership Profile Report with Special Olympics, which Councils are to submit annually to Supreme. For this achievement, the Ontario State Council received over \$5,800 from Supreme to assist us with our various Special Olympics programs, thus demonstrating the importance of Councils reporting their activities with Special Olympics.

As our partnership with Special Olympics continues to grow stronger each year, we will be calling upon you, the District Deputies, to assist us, especially at the local level, in further developing a closer relationship between your Councils and with the Special Olympics District Developer and Community Councils in your area. To assist you, a list of each of the District Developers and the 12 Regions in Ontario, which they're responsible, for has been compiled, thus allowing you to cross-reference them by either District or Diocese,

Last year, the Ontario State Council and Special Olympics Ontario developed a program by which we can both promote and raise the public's awareness of our involvement with Special Olympics, along with providing our members, the Squires, and our families the opportunity to work more closely with the Special Olympics movement throughout the province, be it as volunteers or organizing events. This new program is called the Knights of Columbus Flag Relay.

The Knights of Columbus Flag Relay program is a year round program of events, activities and fundraisers for Special Olympics conducted across Ontario and was formally introduced in June 2011 at the Special Olympics Floor Hockey Championships in Sudbury for which we are the first jurisdiction to be entrusted with the use of the Special Olympics flag whenever we, the Knights, are involved with Special Olympics and that each Diocesan Association and Zone has been given a Special Olympics flag for which your Councils are invited to use whenever they are conducting a Special Olympics activity.

A major component of the Flag Relay program is our participation in the Annual Special Olympics Provincial Games and Championships. The Flag Relay is coordinated through the Diocesan Association and Zones in which the Games are being held, along with the assistance of the District Deputies from the area. Together they work closely with both the Organizing Committee and Special Olympics Ontario in deciding how active the Knights will be involved in the Games, be it as volunteers, by conducting various fund-raising initiatives for the Games, by helping to raise the public's awareness of the Games, or by organizing a

pre-Games Special Olympics Flag Raising Ceremony. During the Games, in addition to volunteering, the Knights are invited to provide a Fourth Degree Honour Guard for the Opening Ceremonies, along with carrying in and raising the Special Olympics Game flag to start the Games.

For those communities, across the province, which will be sending athletes to the Games, the local Knights are invited to conduct events to help support the local team and to promote the Games throughout their area, such as Adopting a Special Olympics athlete/team, which helps to cover some of the costs the athlete(s) will incur to attend the Games, and to organize a Special Olympics Flag Raising Ceremony with their local Special Olympics community.

As for our Special Olympics Program, the Flag Relay serves as an umbrella for all the various activities and events that we do for Special Olympics, be it the Hometown Games, which are the local competitions hosted or sponsored by the Knights for the Special Olympians in their communities, the K of C Blue Jays Day, where we send over 250 Special Olympians to attend a Blue Jays game, which this year will be July 28th at the Jays vs. Detroit game, the K of C Soccer Challenge, Hockey Shootout and Free Throw Competitions, where Special Olympians are invited to participate in our Council, District and Regional Level Competitions. These are just a few of the activities we do for Special Olympics.

Plus we have our many fund-raising initiatives that we participate in, such as our Tootsie Roll fundraising campaign, where we raise over \$15,000 annually, the 50/50 Draws at Leafs, Senators, Raptors and Toronto FC games, where we raise close to \$40,000 annually and the Adopt-an Athlete Program and Donations, which totaled over \$60,000. Last year the Ontario Knights helped raise over \$116,000 for Special Olympics.

The Ontario State Council invites all Councils to participate in our Tootsie Roll campaign. Your council can run this special fundraising event for the Special Olympics either on its own, with another council, or as part of a district fundraiser. Our goal is for this program to be province wide and for us to achieve this we will need your help. Should you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to contact me.

Finally, last year we introduced the John P. (Jack) Clancey Award in Support of Special Olympics Ontario. This award, in honour of our Past State Deputy John P. (Jack) Clancey, who worked tirelessly to build a strong relationship between the Knights of Columbus in Ontario and Special Olympics, is presented annually to the Council who has organized, helped with and gone beyond to help make these athletes succeed in both sport and in life.

If you wish to become more involved with the Special Olympics program in your area, please visit their website at <http://www.specialolympicsontario.com>.

For more detailed information pertaining to the Knights work with the Special Olympics, please visit our website at <http://kofcflagrelay.com/>.

In closing, I want to again thank you for your support of Special Olympics and may God bless you for all the good work that you do.

Vivat Jesus.