

# Houghton College hosts Special Olympics

HOUGHTON — The rain held off Wednesday, and 204 participants were treated to a sunny, warm day for the 30th Annual Allegany County Special Olympics Field Day held at the Houghton College track.

It was the first time in a couple years that the weather did not force activities indoors, and the participants really warmed up to the outdoor activities.

Cattaraugus-Allegany BOCES adaptive physical education teacher Maiké Zillgitt coordinated the event for the third time.

"We had athletes from seven different schools come out today, and the students really enjoyed being outside in the warm sunshine. Getting the event back outside this year also allowed us to run some different events, so it was a nice change for the athletes," said Zillgitt.

The event kicked off with a live singing of the National Anthem, followed by the traditional parade of athletes around the track as "Chariots of Fire" played over the loudspeaker.

Two students from the special education program at Cuba-Rushford Central School carried the torch and led the parade. Karla Waite's BOCES class from Wellsville Elementary School took first place in the banner competition.

Following the opening, there were 13 different events and activities to challenge participants at this year's event, including: 50- and 100-yard dashes, an activity station (with a parachute and moon ball), Frisbee throw for accuracy, Frisbee throw for distance, obstacle course, softball throw for distance, long jump, high jump, standing long jump, soccer kick, canoes and horse rides.

"The kids are having a ball. They loved the canoes, and they are so excited to ride the horses," said Genesee Valley Central School special education teacher Jaci Rizzo.

Houghton College's therapeutic recreation department provided nearly 90 volunteers for the event. Andrea Boone facilitated the event on behalf of



PHOTO PROVIDED

Students from Diane Messing's BOCES class at Genesee Valley Central School are shown running the 50-yard dash.

Houghton College and student Rene Sortore coordinated the student volunteers.

"We did things a little differently (this year) with our volunteers," said Sortore. "We had about 75 students from the Recreation Department act as volunteers at the various events, but we also had more than a dozen others who volunteered to travel from event to event with each group. On top of that, the equestrian and paddle sports clubs also provided their own volunteers to work those stations. This arrangement seemed to work much better, especially the individuals who went from event to event with the different classes. I think it really added to the experience for the children."

The efforts of Houghton College didn't go unnoticed.

"I was just so impressed by the number of volunteers from Houghton College, and how quickly the young man who volunteered for our group learned the names of the children and the way he interacted with them," said Genesee Valley special education teacher Lynn Kunz.

In addition to the

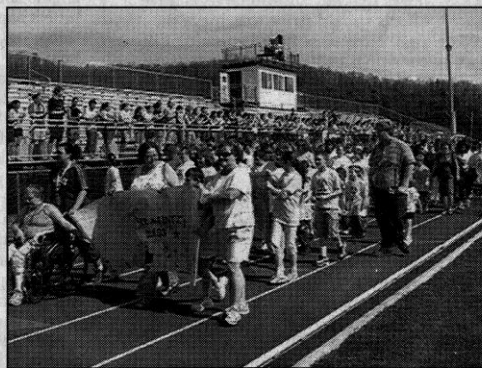


PHOTO PROVIDED

Athletes are cheered on by Houghton College student volunteers in the stands during the Opening Parade.

Houghton College students, more than 100 teachers, therapists and aides from BOCES and special education programs at participating districts also volunteered to help make the event a success. Several parents and family members were also on hand to enjoy the activities.

Zillgitt extended special thanks to Dunkin' Donuts and INK Printing Company, both of Wellsville, for their support of the event. Area special educators are also supporting a 50/50 raffle to pay for this year's shirts. The drawings will be held

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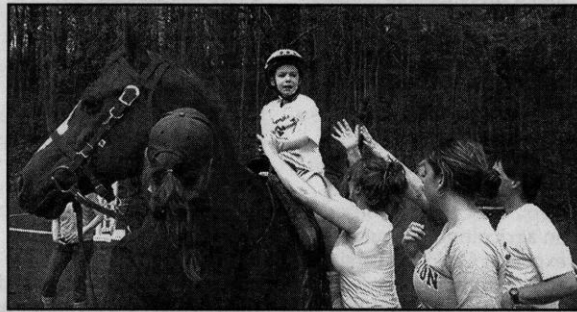


Photo submitted

**Christian Babak from Natalie Montague's BOCES class at Cuba-Rushford Central School is shown atop a horse.**

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