Students volunteer with Special Olympics

By Brooke Olster
Staff Writer

Several Rider students have recently been volunteering their time and enthusiasm with the “Lawrence Lightning,” the local Special Olympics Bowling team. Every Monday night Rider students and athletes gather at Colonial Lanes on Route One and compete in three rounds of bowling.

“Working with the Mercer County Special Olympics team gave Rider students as well as team members a chance to become friends and to develop extraordinary bonds that will last for a lifetime,” said senior Jessica Sandyck.

The group of students with special needs, including those with Down Syndrome and mental retardation, are currently matriculating at West Windsor-Plainsboro High School South. Due to efforts made by Drs. Michelle Kamens and Dr. Christina Dolyuk of the Special Education Department, these students have been involved in many activities taking place on Rider’s campus.

“Bowling is just one of many initiatives on campus to bring students with disabilities together with age-appropriate peers in a college setting,” said Dr. Hope Corman, the coach of the bowling team.

These initiatives began with the West-Windsor Plainsboro students coming on campus for job training purposes in the fall of 2000. Last October, Rider students first joined the athletes to make the group an official “unified team.”

At first, this opportunity appealed mostly to psychology and special-education students at Rider, but through word-of-mouth, a broad range of students quickly joined the team, according to Corman.

“These Rider students who bowl alongside with the athletes really have exceeded my expectations,” said Corman. “We’ve had a great two years and I am looking forward to another successful year.”

Alpha Phi Omega, the co-ed community service fraternity at Rider, sends about a dozen volunteers every week. Two or three members were going every week and once the rest of the group saw how much fun they were having, more began to volunteer, according to Jeannine Puglisi, the service vice president.

“I think Special Olympics bowling is a great opportunity for students to get involved,” said Puglisi. “It allows you to put a smile on the faces of the people you bowl with while having fun yourself.”

Freshman Geoff Rickert said that the experience was a positive one.

“Bowling was the highlight of my week because I was able to forget about everything and just enjoy my time with the athletes, who always brightened my day,” said Rickert.

“Being paired with a college student in a sport that anyone

Participants in the Special Olympics program.

can compete in is a highly beneficial experience for the bowlers,” said Corman. “They are building their confidence by competing and socializing with higher functioning students.”

Besides bowling, as the season only ranges from October through March, students with disabilities in Mercer County have opportunities to compete in a variety of athletic activities, depending on their skills and interests. However, for the Rider students who volunteer every week, the majority say that they enjoy bowling the most.

“Personally, it gave me a chance to experience being a part of a team where my efforts were acknowledged by the smiles and excitement on the teammates faces when I attended practices every week,” said Sandyck.

“That is a memory that I will always cherish.”

The Special Olympics program allowed the students involved to meet different people.

“It is a way for people with disabilities to socialize with other people,” said sophomore Nicole Zinger. “In the end, we all form friendships. It really is a wonderful experience.”

FREE for College Students up to 1,000 AT&T Phone Card Minutes!* When you switch to or sign up for AT&T Local Phone Service,* you’ll get up to 1,000 phone card minutes, unlimited local calls from your house or apartment, PLUS your choice of 2 calling features such as Caller ID and Call Waiting.*

Unlimited local calls PLUS your choice of 2 calling features All for only $18.95 a month

Call toll-free 1 866 846-4163 and ask for extension 41498

* Customers will be mailed 1,000 AT&T Phone Card minutes as four (4) $250 minute AT&T Phone Cards. Customers will also be mailed a separate letter from AT&T providing confirmation of their order for AT&T phone cards. AT&T Phone Cards: A surcharge of $3 minutes applies to pay phone calls. Minutes are based on US domestic calls. International long distance charges may apply. Charges for airtime and service are determined by the length and nature of the call. AT&T offers a variety of calling plans and services that provide different calling features and benefits at different prices. AT&T is not responsible for the content on individual web sites linked from the AT&T calling plans and services web sites. AT&T retains the exclusive remedy for all disputes arising out of the purchase or use of this Card, except for matters you may take to small claims court, in a limited fashion pursuant to the terms of the AT&T Consumer Services Agreement accessible at www.att.com/wiring/agreement.html. YOUR DEPUTIES WILL NOT BE MADE PART OF A CLASS ACTION. Complaints not resolved to your satisfaction may be directed to the state regulatory agency where card was obtained. Cards expire 12/31/US. Service provided by AT&T or by AT&T Alaskan in Alaska. If you’re newly accepted an offer to switch to AT&T Local Service, we can fulfill only on the first response received. Offer expires 6/30/2005.

* Available only in vision areas. A per-line access fee (FCC Line Charge), Universal Connectivity Charge of 49p per line and other charges apply.

* Caller ID equipment required if chosen. Some features may not be available in all areas and some features may not be compatible with each other.

© 2003 AT&T. All rights reserved.