



Bend plays host to 2008 Special Olympics Oregon Winter Games

BEND, OR– As the snow piles up on the slopes of Mt. Bachelor in Deschutes County, hundreds of Special Olympics Oregon athletes are preparing to compete for Olympic style medals and ribbons in the 2008 State Winter Games Snow Sports, presented by Les Schwab Tire Centers.

Special Olympics Oregon State Winter Games/Snow Sports will take place on March 1 & 2 on Mt. Bachelor. Athletes from around Oregon will be on Mt. Bachelor for two days of competitions in the sports of alpine skiing (slalom, giant slalom, downhill), snowboarding, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing.

"Special Olympics Oregon appreciates the continued partnership with Mt. Bachelor," said Mark Hanken, Senior VP of Sports, "Our athletes enjoy the opportunity to showcase their talents here and the Bend community truly embraces this event."

The State Winter Games event spans two weekends, with the second part of the event—indoor sports—taking place in Springfield, March 8-9. Approximately 800 athletes will compete in basketball and power-lifting in Springfield. Athletes train and

compete in each sport for a minimum of eight weeks before participating in State Winter Games.

More than 200 volunteers will help make State Winter Games/Snow Sports happen in Bend. These volunteers donate their time as coaches, course monitors, officials, and other positions. In addition to event volunteers, there are volunteers organizing Special Olympics Oregon local programs across the state doing everything from athlete recruitment and training to fundraising and promotion.

"Our volunteers are the very lifeblood of Special Olympics," said Margie Hunt, Chief Executive Officer of Special Olympics Oregon. "Without them, thousands of athletes would not have access to our life-changing sports programs. These key volunteers see the value of our programs for both our athletes and the community, and are proud to spend their time helping Special Olympics Oregon athletes succeed, both in sport and in life."

The weekend of Snow Sports competition will be preceded by the second annual Polar Plunge, a fundraiser for Special Olympics Oregon set for 6:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 29. Led by local law enforcement officers from the Law Enforcement Torch Run (LETR) program, some 400 participants are expected to plunge into the Deschutes River to raise funds for Special Olympics Oregon. The Polar Plunge site will be in the Old Mill District

Les Schwab Tire Centers, official sponsor of all Special Olympics Oregon State Games, will present the "Pride in Performance Awards" at the Games Ceremonies for State Winter Games/Snow Sports at Summit High School on March 1. These awards go to outstanding athletes and coaches who have participated during the winter sports season.

Founded in 1972, Special Olympics Oregon is a year-round program offering Olympic-style sports to athletes with intellectual disabilities. Through Special Olympics, people with intellectual disabilities can enjoy the opportunity to be treated as people, not just as disabled. In sport, athletes gain self-confidence, social competency and other enhanced skills, both physical and social. Full schedule of events and additional information can be found at www.soor.org.

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