



## **Special Olympics** *Wisconsin*

March 23, 2004

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### **Neillsville man chosen as coach for World Winter Games in Japan**

Madison - Washington, D.C.-based Special Olympics International (SOI) recently named Steve Meurett of Neillsville as a cross country skiing coach for the 2005 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Nagano, Japan on Feb. 22-March 5, 2005.

As the coach for cross country skiing, Meurett will travel to Nagano and provide technical assistance and chaperoning support to the cross country athletes of Team USA. Coaches are also responsible for communication of all information updates to their assigned athletes, their family members and local coaches. Coaches are also responsible for ensuring that all of their athletes are training with appropriate supervision. Each coach is to ensure the athletes and coaches of Team USA experience the athletic, physical and social benefits of participating in a World Games.

Meurett, an Art Specialist with Neillsville Public Schools, has been active with Special Olympics for more than 15 years, helping on the local, state and international levels. On the local level, he is a cross country and track coach. On the state level he has served on the Area Management Team for the State Winter Games in Wausau and nationally was given the opportunity to serve as a coach for the 2000 pre-World Games and 2001 World Games held in Anchorage, Alaska. In addition Meurett was a head track coach for the 2003 World Summer Games in Dublin, Ireland.

"I am so honored to represent Neillsville, Wisconsin, our athletes and the United States of America at the World Games next year," said Meurett. "Since coaching the World Winter Games in Alaska, I have always dreamed of returning to this level and coaching in Japan for Team USA. I have always taken away from these games and these fantastic athletes more than what I can ever give back." Meurett added that after 20 years of coaching high school athletics, he really appreciates what Special Olympics athletes bring to 'athletic competition' since they know the true meaning of competition. "It's something we don't always see in sports today," he said. "The winter games are truly something I love and I know I'll be coaching with the best coaches in the United States with some of the best athletes in the country."

Special Olympics Team USA will compete in seven sports at the World Games which includes alpine skiing, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, snowboarding, speed skating, figure skating and floor hockey. Team USA consists of approximately 200 athletes and 50 coaches representing all 50 United States and the District of Columbia. Over 3,500 Special Olympics Team USA family members and friends are expected to travel to the Games to cheer for their athletes sharing in one of the biggest moments in their lives. Worldwide, approximately 2,500 athletes, 650 coaches and official delegates, 10,000 volunteers, 28,000 family members and friends, and 150,000 spectators are expected to be in Japan to celebrate and be a part of the Games. This is the 8th Special Olympics World Winter Games.

Special thanks to Columbia Sportswear and Sage Hospitality as the sponsors for Team USA. Special Olympics is a year-round program of sports training and competition for individuals with cognitive disabilities. Nearly 10,000 athletes train and compete in Wisconsin through 17 different Olympic-type summer and winter sports. For more information on Special Olympics Wisconsin, or the World Games, contact Kelly Kloepping at 800/552-1324, or visit [www.specialolympicswisconsin.org](http://www.specialolympicswisconsin.org).