

Special Olympics 2013
By: Whitney Brockman

Ozona was represented well as the Ozona Special Olympics team went to the third annual Best of the West Olympic meet in Sonora, Texas. This was the third year that Sonora has held the meet. Ozona has attended all three years. Seventy-five students competed and eight schools/coops participated. Students represented Junction ISD, Crockett County CCSD, Menard ISD, Reagan County CSD, Rocksprings ISD, Small Schools Cooperative, Sonora ISD, and Three Rivers Special Populations Cooperative.

Since we first began attending the Special Olympic meet in Sonora our numbers have grown in volunteers as well as students participating. When we first started we took 5 students from the high school and the elementary school. This year we took 9 students and had representatives from each Crockett County school. (Elementary, Middle School, and High School) Also, we take 10-12 volunteers each year to help with the event and help the students. To be eligible to participate in Special Olympics students must be at the age of 8 to compete; however, we do not exclude those too young to participate. The Special Olympic Headquarters allow students age 3-7 to participate in the Future Stars Events. Future Stars participants do field day and sensory activities in the end zones.

Students have several choices of track and field events to choose from. Students each get to participate in one track event and one field event. Students can choose from long jump, shotput, softball throw, ball throw for distance, 10m wheelchair race, 10m walk, 25m wheelchair race, 25m walk, 25m run, 50m walk, 50m run, 50m motorized wheelchair race, and 100m run. Ozona chose to participate in the softball throw and the 50 and 100m runs. After each event students go to the award stand located at the front of the stands and receive their medal whether it be silver, bronze, or gold. Students participating receive two medals. One medal for track events and one medal for field events.

To prepare for the meet we start gathering paperwork. Students going must get a physical and get signed off to go by a physician as well as fill out an athlete code of conduct, and a picture release form. Also, volunteers/coaches that go are responsible for filling out paperwork and getting a background check done. After paperwork is gathered we start going to the Ozona track to practice our softball throwing and the 50 meter and 100 meter dash in early March. We also start gathering t-shirt orders for fans, teammates, and volunteer coaches. I would personally like to say thank you to the Ozona Booster Club. Each year the Booster Club has paid for our team t-shirts. We always extend the offer for parents and fans to buy the t-shirt as well.

To summarize I would just like to say that Special Olympics is such a great event to be a part of. Each year we begin the event with an opening ceremony where students walk a lap at the track as their school district's name is called. Students are so excited to be recognized as they should be because this is their day to shine and be recognized. I feel like we can take a lot of life lessons from Special Olympics and the students that represent it. "Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt." Wow! Shouldn't we always have this positive and empowering view in life?