

Frank "Doc" Lavin

Frank is a ski legend throughout Pennsylvania, as a result of his work with the Special Olympics. He grew up in the Endless Mountain region, Crystal Lake, and at an early age discovered a passion for skiing, which has extended over five decades.

After graduating from college, Frank accepted a position as a Secondary Special Education teacher at Blue Ridge High School in New Milford, PA. As a young educator, Frank realized that children and adults with special needs played a very limited active role in life; these special people just stood on the sidelines. He realized that a program of sports training and athletic competition for individuals of all levels of ability could help involve his special people and make them more active participants in many areas of life skills. In 1975, Frank introduced Area P Special Olympics at Elk Mountain Ski Center in Uniondale, Pa. The program is accredited through Special Olympics International and Special Olympics Pennsylvania. At its inception the Program had only six athletes. Now the program involves over 2,600 athletes in nineteen different sports. The athletes represent the five counties in Northeastern Pennsylvania: Lackawanna, Pike, Wayne, Susquehanna and Wyoming.

Frank's local Ski Program is considered to be the largest ski program in the world with many athletes from scores of participating school districts, group homes and other residential and non-residential agencies participating. The growth of Area P has been phenomenal! Area resorts serve 1,000 athletes per week.

Each year in January, Area P conducts the Special Olympics Pennsylvania Eastern Winter Sectionals, which will bring athletes from all NE Pennsylvania Programs to local winter resorts. In addition, the Annual Cassaro/Davis Memorial Ski Race, which is well known nationally as a premier invitational ski race, will be held to honor the memory of two bright and promising young men, Pat and Jeff, who live in the hearts of everyone involved in the Special Olympic program.

In preparation for the week of local Winter Games, Mr. Lavin meets with representatives from the several resorts administrative staff, ski patrol, restaurant staff, rental staff, school and agencies' ski coordinators, and numerous volunteers who donate their time as gatekeepers, statisticians, intercom system operators, to name a few! He also arranges for on-site medical services he maintains and reorders stock for the various types of winter equipment needed such as clothing, helmets, and ski equipment.

To start the annual event, the official opening ceremonies kick-off with the Parade of Champions, the Special Olympic athletes,

music by a local high school band, the lighting of the Special Olympics Torch, and the Special Olympics Oath, which is administered to all participants. Approximately 350 Special Olympians compete in the following categories: advanced, intermediate, novice skiers and guide athletes. All Area P participating athletes are presented with gold, silver & bronze medals, as well as trophies in honor of their accomplishments. Additional activities continue throughout the week such as pizza parties, disk jockey dances, as well as winter recreational sports. A luncheon for athletes and guests follows the conclusion of the program. After the Area P competition is concluded, athletes and coaches are selected to represent Area P at the SOPA Winter Games, which are held each year near Johnstown, PA.

Raising funds for his programs is another area in which Frank excels. Because the Special Olympics are a non-profit organization with no government funding, Frank dedicates much of his time raising funds in the local communities. Since the Area P Special Olympic program is well known, the program exists through the kindness, generosity, mercy and good will of individuals, as well as service organizations. Frank and Committee members organize fundraising events such as golf tournaments, car raffles, dinner dances, New York City trips, ski-a-thons, and raffles.

