February 2021 Special Olympics Article for Local Mike Oswald Athlete Reporter

One month in…so far so good!

Let’s not kid ourselves, COVID-19 is still very real, so, Special O start up plans are a mixed bag. As you know, the province-wide restrictions on group events and social gatherings have been extended until February 5, 2021. Therefore in-person programs are suspended. Getting back to the old normal still seems like an eternity away, however there are plans in place for when it does come to fruition.

SOBC has sent many guidelines that will be a challenge for any district because the requirements are basically a one coach to one athlete ratio. But on the Coast, everything from Curling to Swimming is on hold.

Just because an athlete cannot attend in person activities, does not mean that programs are fully cancelled. There are opportunities for virtual events for all interested.

There have been some one-to-one coach/athlete virtual training sessions via Zoom. Coach Richard Hoath reports that a small group of Basketball players are meeting on the Coast once/week for a half hour. Any other local coaches and athletes who wish to keep in touch this way can contact Community Development Coordinator, Chelsea Rogers [crogers@specialolympics.bc.ca](mailto:crogers@specialolympics.bc.ca) and she will set you up.

Athletes furthering their potential have NOT taken a backseat to the pandemic. Up to 12 athletes (and their mentors) were able to register for an Athlete Speakers Bureau 1 Virtual Athlete Speaker course to improve speech writing skills and public speaking techniques.

Some of the many tools SOBC offers include the following but there are always more to explore on the website <https://www.specialolympics.ca/british-columbia>

SOBC Basic Sport Skills gives athletes tools to continue training in their particular sport.

SOBC Winter Warrior provides a calendar chock full of challenges to keep athletes fit and healthy. There is even a chance to win prizes for participating.

SOBC Music Movers lets athletes move and work on fitness in a fun way.

SOBC is also offering ongoing Volunteer Professional Development for coaches and volunteers. On February 3rd, Mark Tewksbury past chair of Special Olympics Canada and champion Olympic swimmer, kicked off this series of webinars aimed at acknowledging the amazing volunteers who keep Special O going and furthering their connections with their particular programs and each other.

A huge thank you is in order for everyone at SOBC for doing everything in their power to keep athletes and volunteers interested and engaged during these trying times. Thanks also to our local executive who are doing everything they can to keep our spirits up and the organization afloat.

Volunteers are caring, dedicated and selfless individuals who bring joy, knowledge and skill to any organization but this is especially true of Special O. In January we learned that Basketball Coach Marion will be leaving the Coast and leaving big shoes to fill in this sport. Thank you Marion. We wish you luck in your future endeavours.

Other coaches and volunteers as well, who have been facing health or other challenges have been forced to leave their positions. As a result, when programs become fully operational, there will be a call for new volunteers to fill the gap.

Don't be shy. Be among the first to heed the call. Contact Volunteer Coordinator, Marney Qually [ronandmarney@gmail.com](mailto:ronandmarney@gmail.com) to learn more.

On a final note, thank you to the anonymous donor who made a contribution to Special Olympics Sunshine Coast in memory of a dear friend Ken McBride. Ken was known to all in the community as a talented musician, mentor and beloved figure to all the athletes.

He had a special place in our hearts. Everyone misses his music and his smile.