**Media release**

**Special Olympics celebrate 300th volunteer signing up for National Summer Games**

Special Olympics New Zealand this week welcomed the 300th volunteer signing up to be part of the Freemasons New Zealand Special Olympics National Summer Games in Hamilton.

Duncan Enersen and daughter Greer from Waikato were presented with the brand new volunteer uniform by National Summer Games Director Asti Farrell to acknowledge this exciting landmark in the countdown to the games in December.

Over 600 volunteers will support the nearly 1,300 athletes who will be competing in 10 sports at eight different venues across Hamilton, and Special Olympics Volunteer Manager Nikki Cameron is pleased to have 300 volunteers registered, more than four months out from the opening ceremony.

“The volunteers are the heart and the soul of the games, and we are privileged to have people flying in from all over the country to offer their skills to help our athletes have a great experience,” says Nikki.

Waikato farm Operations manager Duncan Enersen had been looking for an opportunity to volunteer and when he saw an advert on Facebook, he jumped on the opportunity.

“I had been keen to give something back to the community, but never really got around to it,” says Duncan.

“We have four children and one of them has a mild disability, so the Special Olympics seemed like a good event to get involved in,” says Duncan, who has no idea what to expect in December, but is up for any job that needs to get done.

“I have taken my son to sessions of Life Unlimited where children with disabilities can play sport, and I really enjoyed that, so I am really looking forward to the Special Olympics.”

As Duncan was registering, daughter Greer also decided to join the party and her father says that he is looking forward to sharing the experience with his daughter.

After both had signed up, the 15-year-old student from Waikato Diocesan School for Girls realised that volunteering at the games would also contribute towards her Duke of Edinburgh award.

Volunteer Manager Nikki Cameron says that the Special Olympics are a great opportunity for young people to learn new skills and be part of an amazing event.

“And we really want to encourage those students who are working towards a Duke of Edinburgh medal to sign up because the National Games are a perfect way to earn some credits while you are having fun.”

Another Hamilton local to join the volunteer team is Rebecca Aston who was responsible for bringing the games to Waikato in her role as Major Events Manager of H3, who run all major venues for the Hamilton District Council.

“I am involved in other volunteer work, so decided to put my hand up in a personal capacity to help out. I’ve got no idea what to expect, but with my events background I hope that I can be helpful,” says Rebecca who adds that her team usually deals with international high-performance events so the Special Olympics will be a terrific new experience.

“It is a great opportunity for Hamilton to host and showcase sports at a different level and get the athletes to enjoy the same venues where international teams perform.

“And we will make sure the Special Olympics athletes will be treated like international superstars and have five days in Hamilton they will always remember.”

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