


TAKE IT TO THE HOOP



Taylor University is hosting the 2012 Indiana-Grant County Special Olympics "Take-It-To-The-Hoop" basketball tournament tomorrow in the KSAC. The double-elimination tournament includes more than 350 athletes and 23 teams from all over Indiana.

"Take-It-To-The-Hoop is a great opportunity for all of the athletes to show how hard they have worked over the past few months preparing for this tournament," sophomore Kelsey Snyder, event director, said.

Athletes, ranging from junior-high students to adults in their 70s and 80s, have been practicing twice a week since October.

The public is encouraged to attend the tournament. There is no admission charge.

As director, Snyder is reinstating an idea that was a big hit in the past. Taylor students have the opportunity to be team hosts who will be assigned to a team for the day. Hosts will greet their teams when they arrive, make sure they get registered, find out when their games are, make sure they get to all their games on time and cheer their team on during the games.

"Each team will get their own personal Taylor student for the day," Snyder said. "Hosting a team is a fun experience for the Taylor student to hang out with the athletes and get to know them throughout the day — eating lunch with them, cheering for them at their games and showing them around campus."

Taylor student volunteers will serve as referees, scorekeepers and team hosts. "This event gives Taylor students the chance to connect with people who have disabilities through a fun and encouraging environment," Snyder said.

REBECCA SEXTON

Contributor

Senior Bailey McElravy found refereeing last year to be a rewarding experience.

"It was different from any other basketball that I had ever seen," McElravy said, "not because of their skill, but because of their attitudes. The athletes were so nice to each other and

it was obvious that playing basketball was a privilege. They were just so happy to be there that it made me praise God for my mental and physical abilities."

Indiana Special Olympics offers year-round sports competitions to participants with intellectual disabilities, involving almost 11,000 athletes. Sports include alpine skiing, aquatics, basketball, ballroom dancing, bocce ball, bowling, cycling, figure skating, flag football, golf, powerlifting, snowboarding, soccer, speed skating, volleyball and more.

Indiana Special Olympics ranges from high-ability athletes to individual skills athletes. There will be 69 individual skill athletes, who will compete in drills such as shooting, dribbling and passing.

County Coordinator for the Indiana-Grant County Special Olympics Tim Faust has connected the Taylor Disability Outreach group to the Grant County teams, five of which will be competing in the tournament. The Disability Outreach Group assists with the team practices at Justice Intermediate School in Marion. Taylor participates in the Indiana Special Olympics with basketball, track and field, golf, swimming, flag football and bowling.

Any student interested in volunteering or who would like more information about the tournament should contact Kelsey Snyder at Kelsey_snyder@taylor.edu.