



Ross County Special Olympics

Winter 2024  
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# Ross County Special Olympics Staying Busy to Finalize 2024!

The Ross County Special Olympics has had a full schedule of events since competing at the State Summer Games at the end of June. We started regular golf season immediately after the fourth of July and added new athletes to the program. One of our parents and coaches, Tonya Brown, wanted to add a new sport to our program, and with her support, we now offer Disc Golf. We had a surprisingly large registration for the new sport. We decided to run disc golf through the months of August and September. We still remained to have cornhole and flag football this year and had very successful seasons with new coaches for both sports. Athlete, Noah Hiles, became our first ever Athlete Coach for cornhole. His training this past year in leadership has given him opportunities that he has always dreamed of! The Trailblazers celebrated their participation in true fashion with a dinner banquet where each of them received a gift and trophy. Heading into the new year we are already in full swing with basketball, cheerleading, and swimming. Make sure to follow us on Facebook to receive notifications on upcoming events—we would love to see more of our community members at our games to witness the joy that this program brings us! As always, thank you for your support and we wish you all a safe and joyous holiday.

## TRAILBLAZER GOLF

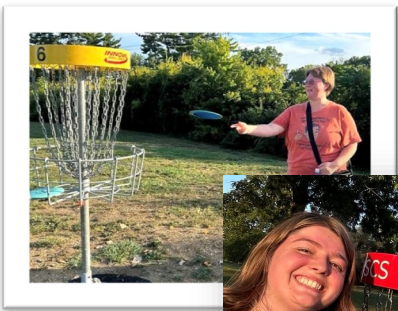
Golf is a sport that we are still trying to iron out so that we can eventually compete in the regional and state events. It is a sport that takes much determination and patience to increase the skills needed to compete. Our program this year was coached by Steve Gilliland and his son, Jacob. Coach Steve is a known golfer in our community and strives to make our community a better place for children and people with developmental disabilities. Coach Jacob recently started working at a local agency to help people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Our program is lucky to have volunteers like them who care deeply about our community and making it a better place.

We had six athletes participate in this year's sport and each of them improved throughout the season. The athletes practiced once a week on the driving range and then once a week on the course at Jaycees Golf Course. We are so thankful for the Jaycees for allowing our program to utilize their facilities for our practices at not cost. With the sponsorships and donations of our community we are able to outfit the athletes with uniforms and equipment that is theirs to keep. We would not be able to provide the quality of service we do without our community!

The athletes competed in the Pioneer Golf Outing at the beginning of September to conclude their golf season. They were on teams that included a few of their peers that love the game of golf but are unable to participate in Special Olympics due to other commitments. This outing was open to the community so our athletes experienced inclusion at its best!







## TRAILBLAZER DISC GOLF

So much appreciation goes out to Tonya Brown for the addition of disc golf to our program! Tonya is a parent of one of our athletes, Kaitlyn Brown. She is employed as a Service and Support Administrator at the Pioneer Center. Tonya is such a big part of our program as she is not only our disc golf coach but also our swim coach. She wanted to add this sport to our programming and we told her if she had the athletes register than we would support it!

We held a “try it out” night for athletes to come try the sport, because many people including our athletes have never played disc golf before. It is a popular sport in Ross County as we have at least 4 official courses throughout our county. After the “try it out” night we had thirteen athletes register!

We practiced at the Aileen Cole Stewart DGC located at the VA Medical Center in Chillicothe. The athletes had two practices per week. The last few weeks of their season the coaches and volunteers held an intersquad tournament for competition to use the skills they had learned throughout the season. We hope that this sport continues to grow and involve more of our community!

*“You are a champion! Your dedication and spirit inspire us all.”*

### FALL ALL SPORTS BANQUET

The Trailblazers who participated in the Fall season were invited to celebrate their participation at a dinner banquet held at Saint Peter’s Parish Hall. Each athlete received a custom baseball cap and sport specific trophy for their participation. The event was catered by Haute Doggerie which provided a taco bar. The sports recognized for this banquet were golf, cornhole, disc golf, and flag football. It is important to recognize the participation of each athlete in our program because as much joy as the program bring them there are also many challenges to face. Way to go, Trailblazers!



## TRAILBLAZER FLAG FOOTBALL

This is our second year for Flag Football. It is a sport that is rising in popularity throughout the State of Ohio for Special Olympics. We were told after the season that next year we will see organized regional and state competitions for the sport. Our athletes are very excited about the opportunity to compete at the state level. This season we had a new coach, Noah Daniels. Noah had just come off of his first coaching season with us for Athletics (track & field). He was able to rally our flag footballers to a very successful season full of joy and happiness. We had three local games scheduled—two home games and one away. We played Highland and Fayette County programs for our games. These programs have had flag football teams for much longer than us and they are very helpful to us in answering any questions we have to improve our program. Highland and Fayette are also very competitive allowing us to really put our skills to the test!

This year’s football team was made up of fifteen athletes which were mostly returners from last season. We did add a few new athletes to the roster. We practiced twice a week at the Chillicothe Park Annex. Our program would like to thank Brad Scaggs and the Chillicothe Youth Flag Football League for their support during our season. We use their fields and game equipment during our season which is a huge help. Brad is also very helpful in finding us referees for our games. Thanks to all the fans who came to cheer us on—a loud and exciting atmosphere makes a big difference in our experience!





## TRAILBLAZER CORNHOLE

Cornhole was new to our program last year and is not a sanctioned sport of Ohio Special Olympics... yet. This is another sport that is gaining a lot of traction throughout the state and they are considering sanctioning it as an official sport in upcoming years. Our program really enjoys cornhole because it allows people of all abilities to participate. We can make different accommodations to allow athletes with mobility or strength limitations to still compete.

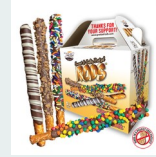
Cornhole practices were held at the Pioneer School track and was coached by Brad Davidson who is an uncle of one of our athletes, Weston. As a coach he brought great energy and happiness to all. We had an athlete coach, Noah Hiles, this year and he was a big help to all. We held a cornhole tournament on our last practice and ordered pizza for all participants. We invited other programs to join our cornhole tournament and unfortunately none were able to participate. We will see a rise in participation in the future with the sanctioning of the sport.

We are proud of our Trailblazers for their dedication to this sport and for the teamwork displayed day in and day out. Go, Blazers!



## FUNDRAISING

Athletes are selling chocolate covered pretzel rods as a fundraiser to help our community stuff those stockings for Christmas. This extra money will help us buy basketball equipment. This is our second year selling the pretzels and they are a big hit! You can purchase as long as inventory is left at Pioneer Center, 167 W. Main Street, during business hours.



Our team will be participating in the Columbus Polar Plunge in February. Visit our page at link below to make donations to our team!

<https://sooh.org/polar-plunge/>



## HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

Make sure to look for our Christmas tree in the Yoctangee Park as part of the Shine On display!





**ROSS COUNTY  
SPECIAL OLYMPICS**

*WHERE EVERYONE BELONGS*

A space for individuals, families, and community partners to come together as we focus on the courage, strength, and skill of athletes.

Through the power of sports, people with intellectual disabilities discover new strengths, abilities, skills, and success. Our athletes find joy, confidence and fulfillment — on the playing field and in life.

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## WHO ARE THE ROSS COUNTY TRAILBLAZERS

The Ross County Special Olympics program is offered to any individual eight years or older in Ross County that has been diagnosed with an intellectual disability. Our program was accredited in September 2022 and our Special Olympics Director is an employee of the Ross County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

Today our roster includes 90 athletes ages 8–60. Currently, we have training and competitions for ten sports including: Athletics, Basketball, Bowling, Cheerleading, Cornhole, Flag Football, Golf, Powerlifting, Disc Golf and Swimming. Most sports are offered for a three month period throughout the year divided into three seasons: Spring, Fall, and Winter.

Special Olympics programming is funded through sponsorships and fundraising. Our athletes do not pay to play! We have an extremely supportive community that allows us to provide high end experiences to our athletes.

In the past year, we have had training and competitions in many places in our community including: AP Prep, YMCA of Ross County, Ohio University Chillicothe, Chillicothe School District, Pioneer Center, Shawnee Lanes and Jaycees Golf Course. Each sport throughout its designated season provides at least two practices per week and a competition schedule.

To become part of the Trailblazer family as an athlete, volunteer, or coach—please visit our website at [www.rossspecialolympics.org](http://www.rossspecialolympics.org) to learn more.

**Ross County Special Olympics**  
*Where Everyone Belongs*

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**Brad Davidson**  
*Cornhole Coach*



**Noah Daniels**  
*Flag Football Coach*



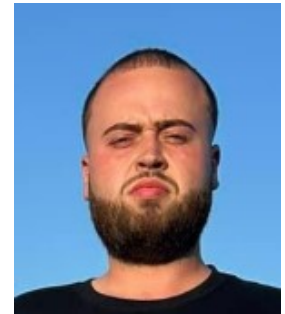
**Tonya Brown**  
*Disc Golf Coach*



**Noah Hiles**  
*Athlete Coach*  
*Cornhole*



**Steve Gilliland**  
*Golf Coach*



**Jacob Gilliland**  
*Golf Coach*