

Glenview steals the show at Shining Stars awards



Thomas Jachtorowycz, of Glenview, the Northern Suburban Special Recreation Association's Youth Participant of the Year, runs around during a Gator track and field practice prior to the Illinois Special Olympics State Summer Games. PHOTO SUBMITTED

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The Northern Suburban Special Recreation Association held its annual Shining Stars awards and recognition banquet at the Hilton Chicago/Northbrook on April 20, and eight of the nine honorees were from communities served by 22nd Century Publications.

"We serve all ages and all abilities," said Craig Culp, NSSRA executive director. "If you like to play and you have a disability, we've got a spot for you. Of those we serve, 51 percent are youth and 49 percent are adults. Our youngest is 4 and our oldest is in his 80s."

Three of the individuals served by the NSSRA — Thomas Jachtorowycz, of Glenview; Matt Rubin, of Lake Bluff; and James Gromoshak, of Highwood — were among the Shining Stars banquet luminaries.

Jachtorowycz, 11, was the recipient of the Youth Participant of the Year Award; Rubin, 26, received the Adult Participant of the Year Award; and Gromoshak earned the Gator Athlete of the Year Award.

“As a parent, I cannot say enough on how much James has grown by being a part of NSSRA,” Gromoshak’s mother, Pat Lenzini, told the 440 people in the banquet hall. “He has made so many wonderful friends.”

Megan Kivarkis, of Northbrook, was honored as Volunteer of the Year, and Glenn Binstein, of Glenview, won Friend of the Year. Wilmette’s Matsumoto family — Jerry; his wife, Lynne; and their sons Jason and Dane — were named Family of the Year.

“Dane is 33-years-old and he has been in NSSRA programs for 25 years,” Jerry said. “It’s a wonderful, nurturing, supportive place.”

Accepting the Advocate of the Year Award was Mary Z. Jaeger, a retired GBS teacher who started the Peer Mentoring program at the school during the 1986-87 school year.

Rebekah Lee, NSSRA manager of Marketing and Communications, said NSSRA has approximately 1,600 participants yearly and about 7,000 registrations for a vast panorama of programs.

“We’re like the park district for people with disabilities that comprises 13 member agencies within the northern suburbs,” she said. “There are several [special recreation associations] in Illinois; we’re the only state that has the model.”

The NSSRA is headquartered at 3105 MacArthur Boulevard in Northbrook. There are 21 full-time staff members, 469 part-time staff numbers and 113 volunteers, as of last year.

Wilmette, Kenilworth, Winnetka, Northfield, Glencoe, Highland Park, Highwood, Lake Forest, Lake Bluff, Northbrook and Glenview are among the 13 participating communities in the 22nd Century Publications reader area. They are joined by Deerfield and Riverwoods.

The Glenview Park District is the biggest contributor, followed by the Northbrook Park District. Park Board members Dave Dillon and Dave Tosh, as well as Superintendent of Leisure Services Elsa Fischer, represented the Glenview Park District at the banquet, while the Northbrook delegation was headed by President Penny Randel and Vice President Mary Ann Chambers.