



## **PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **NSSRA's Golden Gators Win Eight Gold Medals at Special Olympics Illinois' Annual State Summer Games**

**Northbrook – Friday, June 14, 2019** – It was a golden experience for nine members of NSSRA's Gator Athletics teams at Illinois Special Olympics' annual State Summer Games (SSG), taking place last weekend. Competing in swimming, powerlifting and track and field, the team walked away with a collective 14 medals, eight of them gold.

"The 4x25M Relay was the most exciting event of the weekend," said Katie James, a coach and NSSRA's Recreation Specialist for Gator Athletics. "The Gators won by just a few seconds, and between their families and our coaches and their teammates, there was a whole lot of cheering, hugging and happy crying happening in the bleachers."

In addition to the 4x25M Relay, each swimmer also placed in one or more of their other events, with Josh Devries (Deerfield) winning 1<sup>st</sup> place in the 50M Freestyle, Daniel Eichengreen (Highland Park) also taking 1<sup>st</sup> in his division of the 50M Freestyle, Gillian Segall placing 2<sup>nd</sup> in the 100M Butterfly, and Tim Siebert winning gold in the 25M Butterfly and bronze in the 50M Breaststroke.

Peter Mattson, head coach for the Gator Swim Team, remarked, "I was amazed to see their level of teamwork and cooperation this year. They build each other up, are quick to offer encouragement if one of them is having a rough day and celebrate their victories." He continued, "The 4x25 was a new event for everyone this year, but practicing for it brought them together, both as a team and as friends."

Ranging in age from 18 to 39, three Gator powerlifters and two track and field athletes also competed at the Games. Sam Green of Winnetka, a SSG veteran at just 18, placed 1<sup>st</sup> in the 3000M Run and 2<sup>nd</sup> in the 1500M Run. His teammate and first-time Games competitor, Brett Tutt (Northfield), placed 4<sup>th</sup> in Mini Javelin.

Rounding out NSSRA's band of athletes are three powerlifters, Randy Huffmaster and Miguel Lara of Highland Park and Mike Sener of Evanston. NSSRA's powerlifters have dominated at the Games in recent years, and this year was no different. Winning three gold and three silver medals between them, nearly half of the Gators' total medal count, the team's hard work over the last several months showed.

Mattson, also head coach for Gator Powerlifting, commented, "The guys are scrappy. They pump each other up at practice, and cheer when somebody gets a good rep in. They're a real team; one member's victory is everyone's victory."

“One of our athletes had to miss last season because he was dealing with some significant health issues,” Mattson continued. “He was able to rejoin us this year though, and he bounced back in a big way. Seeing him perform so well this year was a really special moment.”

“Gator’s never give up,” was the team’s mantra this year, and after months of perseverance in practices and qualifying competitions, what is most impressive is not the Gators’ 14 medals, but their tenacious spirit and loyal support of each other every step of the way.

## **NSSRA Gator Athletes | 2019 State Summer Games Standings**

### **Powerlifting**

#### **Randy Huffmaster, Highland Park**

4<sup>th</sup>: Bench Press  
1<sup>st</sup>: Combination Bench & Deadlift  
5<sup>th</sup>: Deadlift

#### **Gillian Segall, Highland Park**

2<sup>nd</sup>: 100M Butterfly  
4<sup>th</sup>: 100M Individual Medley  
1<sup>st</sup>: 4x25M Freestyle Relay

#### **Miguel Lara, Highland Park**

2<sup>nd</sup>: Bench Press  
2<sup>nd</sup>: Deadlift

#### **Tim Siebert, Lake Bluff**

1<sup>st</sup>: 25M Butterfly  
1<sup>st</sup>: 4x25M Freestyle Relay  
3<sup>rd</sup>: 50M Breaststroke

#### **Mike Sener, Evanston**

1<sup>st</sup>: Bench Press  
1<sup>st</sup>: Combination Bench & Deadlift  
2<sup>nd</sup>: Deadlift

### **Track & Field**

#### **Sam Green, Winnetka**

2<sup>nd</sup>: 1500M Run  
1<sup>st</sup>: 3000M Run

### **Swimming**

#### **Josh DeVries, Deerfield**

1<sup>st</sup>: 4x25M Freestyle Relay  
6<sup>th</sup>: 50M Breaststroke  
1<sup>st</sup>: 50M Freestyle

#### **Brett Tutt, Northfield**

4<sup>th</sup>: Mini Javelin

#### **Daniel Eichengreen, Highland Park**

1<sup>st</sup>: 4x25M Freestyle Relay  
1<sup>st</sup>: 50M Freestyle

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Northern Suburban Special Recreation Association (NSSRA) provides and facilitates year-round recreation programs and services for children, teens and adults with disabilities who live in the partner communities. NSSRA is an extension of ten park districts, two cities and one village in the northern suburbs of Chicago. This partnership includes the Park Districts of Deerfield, Glencoe, Glenview, Highland Park, Kenilworth, Lake Bluff, Northbrook, Northfield, Wilmette and Winnetka; the Cities of Highwood and Lake Forest; and the Village of Riverwoods. NSSRA has been creating an environment of belonging through play since 1970, and has the distinction as the first Special Recreation Association in the country. For more information about NSSRA and the programs and services it provides, visit [www.nssra.org](http://www.nssra.org).

The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community. Special Olympics Illinois, part of the global Special Olympics family, opened its first games at Soldier Field in 1968. In the years since they have grown to provide opportunities for over 20,000 Illinois athletes with intellectual disabilities in all 102 counties. For more information about Special Olympics Illinois visit [www.soill.org](http://www.soill.org).