

Celebrating community spirit: Lake Chelan Valley Special Olympics fundraising event

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Five hundred gallons of water were used during the Fire & Cop on Top event on August 4, with around 100 participants taking aim at Chelan Fire & Rescue and Chelan County Sheriff personnel. Pictured with some of the children are Troy Keene, (left), and Dennis Hill (right of Chelan Fire & Rescue. Courtesy Regional Manager Tim Toons

By: Katie Lindert, Staff writer

CHELAN - In an inspiring show of unity and community pride, residents of the Chelan area came together with Chelan Fire & Rescue and the Chelan County Sheriff's department to support a cause close to their hearts – the Lake Chelan Valley Special Olympics. The event, held on August 4, in the Safeway parking lot from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., was nothing short of a grand celebration of compassion, camaraderie, and commitment.

The day was marked by exhilarating water fights, where officials perched 10 feet high on a scissor lift engaged in spirited battles with enthusiastic attendees. As the fundraising effort gained momentum, these officials were gradually lowered from their elevated positions, symbolizing the collective determination to "Get Them Back on The Ground."

More than just a fundraiser, the event also provided a platform for potential Special Olympics participants to enroll, making it a significant milestone in the journey of bringing the Special Olympics to the Chelan area. With 500 gallons of water splashed during the four-hour celebration and approximately 100 participants taking part, the event radiated an atmosphere of joy and community engagement. The overwhelming support of several hundred people, both in terms of participation and donations, added to the palpable sense of togetherness.

The heartwarming result was an astonishing \$2,344.49 raised, a testament to the power of a caring community united by a noble cause. The funds will play a crucial role in covering bowling fees for the upcoming Fall season, providing athletes with the opportunity to shine in a sport they love.

Reflecting on the event's success, Tim Toon, the East Regional Program Manager, shared his insights: "These Fire & Cop on Top events are fundraisers and friendraisers. The Chelan Safeway was a very generous host and perfect location. The Chelan Fire & Rescue and Chelan County Sheriff folks were great and very generous with their time and energy. It is so fun to watch our athletes and the general public interact with Fire & Law Enforcement."

Lake Chelan Valley Special Olympics is a burgeoning program in the region, set to welcome both new participants and individuals who have recently joined from other Special Olympics programs. This Fall, over 20 bowlers are gearing up to participate, followed by two basketball teams in Winter (one in Chelan and another in the Quad Cities), two soccer teams in Spring, and combined Bocce Ball teams in Summer. This event marked the exciting inception of this program in Chelan, with a broader goal of hosting 12 such events across Eastern Washington, aiming to raise \$50,000 to empower Special Olympics Athletes in the East.

The enthusiastic response from the greater Chelan community has been awe-inspiring. With a staggering \$2,344.49 raised in just four hours – an average of \$586 per hour – the event exceeded all expectations. Countless donors shared touching stories of how individuals with intellectual disabilities had touched their lives, underscoring the immense capacity for compassion and support within the community.

Tim Toon further expressed his optimism: "The program is gaining momentum. We have a great group of volunteers, and are partnering with the new Lake Chelan Community Center, The Lake Chelan Chamber of Commerce, and the Brewster Boys & Girls Club. We (are) also forging partnerships with the local School Districts."

As the program continues to flourish, there are still unmet needs on the horizon, such as acquiring bowling shirts for the expected 20 plus athletes this Fall and covering transportation costs for athletes from the Quad Cities area to Bowl at Chelan Lanes. Those inspired to contribute to the Lake Chelan Valley Special Olympics' efforts can do so by scanning the QR code.