

## Special Olympians celebrate

*City Club rings in holidays with athletes*

By ANN MORRISON

Updated: 12/13/2011

*The Post staff writer*

Strongsville Special Olympians had a special Christmas celebration in their honor Dec. 10 at the Ehrnfelt Recreation Center. It was the 16th year for the event, which is put on by the Strongsville City Club.

At the breakfast party that morning, the athletes and their families enjoyed the company of their peers, music and dancing with the Orlandi's, balloon creations from Balloon Bender Dave and a special visit from Santa Claus and Slider.

The City Club has been the sponsor of the group since 1968. They pay for event registrations, T-shirts for the athletes, equipment, travel and more. And for 16 years now, they have helped the athletes ring in the holiday season in great fashion with a holiday breakfast. Volunteers from the club served pancakes, French toast, sausage, bacon, eggs and more to over 250 guests, including the athletes and their families.

"The City Club has just been remarkable," said Dana Martin, local coordinator of Special Olympics. "We would not be Strongsville Special Olympics without them. Their support has helped us get a great reputation as one of the best programs in the area."

Martin has been a volunteer with Special Olympics for several years. As a physical education teacher with an adaptive physical education endorsement, she has the background to provide accessible sporting events that meet the needs and abilities of the athletes. The nearly 100 athletes who participate take part in basketball, swimming, track and field, bowling, golf, cycling and ice skating.

The City Club supports those endeavors through funds they raise at the annual Rib Burn-off and Breakfast on the Covered Bridge. They also support other community needs throughout the year, including the Fourth of July fireworks and the city's holiday display. However, Special Olympics still stands as the major



Photo by ANN MORRISON  
Members of Strongsville Special Olympics celebrated the holiday season together at a breakfast put on by the City Club, the group's sponsor.



Photo by ANN MORRISON  
Balloon Bender Dave made candy canes, hats and more for the guests at the Special Olympics holiday breakfast.

undertaking every year, and it holds a place of importance in the members' lives.

"Strongsville Special Olympics started as a small program, and we have grown with the organization. It is so rewarding to partner with the athletes and their families in all the activities that they participate in," said David Knowles, City Club president.

The group also gave each of the athletes a gift - a City Club Special Olympics backpack and a DVD that recapped the year's events. They also received caramel corn from Mayor Thomas Perciak, and poinsettias from Maria Gardens and Petitti Garden Center.

The next sport season that will begin for the athletes will be basketball, which starts in January at the recreation center.

<http://thepostnewspapers.com/results/special-olympics-christmas-strongsville-12-17--morrison->