

# Special Olympians celebrate year

*Strongsville City Club hosts athletes for breakfast with Santa*

By ANN MORRISON  
*The Post staff writer*

Strongsville Special Olympians celebrated the holidays together Dec. 8, with breakfast and entertainment put on by the Strongsville City Club. The club has been hosting the event for the athletes for 17 years now, and each year the excitement can be felt in the air.

The City Club is the main sponsor for the Special Olympics, and they make it their mission to put on a good program for those who are involved. This year, over 100 athletes competed in various sports, including basketball, swimming, track and field, soccer and bowling. Through community events, the club raises money to make the opportunities possible for people with special needs to participate.

"We work two big occasions so that we can fund this program – the rib burn-off and breakfast on the covered bridge. The highest percentage of the money we bring in goes toward Special Olympics," said Bob Jirik, City Club treasurer.

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Photos by ANN MORRISON

The group danced to the musical stylings of the Orlandi's, who played popular Christmas tunes for the Special Olympics celebration.

## Olympians

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The City Club supports the athletes throughout the year, and then brings them all together with their families at this time of year for the Christmas party. There, City Club members and spouses prepared breakfast for over 300 guests. Also in attendance were Santa Claus and Slider, the Cleveland Indians' mascot. Music and dancing were provided courtesy of the Orlandi's, who are big supporters of Special Olympics.

"It's just a great event for everyone," said Terry Toth, City Club president. "The kids get excited to see Slider, and everyone leaves with a greater appreciation for what we are doing."

The sense of community was certainly felt among the guests at the party. Families of special needs children form a support system for one another, and can really celebrate their accomplishments at events such as this one. The Special Olympics organizers, as well as the parents, expressed their appreciation for the contributions of the City Club in maintaining the program over the years.

"Strongsville Special Olympics so appreciates how much the City Club does for our group," said Dana Martin, Special Olympics organizer. "We can't do what we do without them."

A family whose child passed away also thanked the City Club and Special Olympics organizations for their impact on their child's life. Cara Long was a Special Olympian who died this past year. Her family made a monetary donation to the City Club during the Christmas party to show their appreciation and carry on Cara's memory.

Strongsville Special Olympics is open to all special needs individuals age 8 and up who are interested in participating in athletic events. For more information, Martin can be contacted at 440-572-1353.



The Special Olympians had a unique opportunity to visit with Slider, the Cleveland Indians' mascot, at their Christmas celebration.



City Club members and their families helped make and serve breakfast to the Special Olympians and their guests.