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EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
Charleston, Illinois

news

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FILE COPY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

SPECIAL OLYMPICS TO BE HELD AT O'BRIEN STADIUM

CHARLESTON, IL--More than 1000 Eastern Illinois University students and faculty will participate in the Special Olympics as volunteers Friday, April 26, at the University's O'Brien Stadium.

A parade of runners will open the Olympics at 9:30 a.m. with events beginning at 10 a.m. The games offer participants the chance to compete in a variety of events including running, long jump, shot putt and softball.

According to Larry Ankenbrand, Associate Dean of Eastern's College of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, there will be 441 participants, ages 8 and up, from Clark, Coles, Cumberland and Edgar counties in this year's games.

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Ankenbrand said, "The events give the participants an opportunity to be like everyone else, much like the special Olympics' motto says, 'Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.'"

Community and EIU students, faculty and staff volunteers will help by handing out awards and working as track officials. Volunteer huggers will stand at the finish line ready to provide support and praise for the participants.

An appearance by Ronald McDonald, Woodsy the Owl and Smokey the Bear will highlight the day.

"Being a volunteer gives you a better understanding and insight about mentally handicapped people. It helps you realize how fortunate you are, and makes you feel good," said Ankenbrand.

First place winners in each division of the activities will advance to State Olympics in Normal. From each of the 24 area games held in Illinois, one winner is chosen to compete in the International Special Olympics.

Those wishing to volunteer at Eastern's Special Olympics may call Ankenbrand at 581-3412 or 581-6394 for further information. A volunteer table will also be available for people who wish to sign up on that day.