

WASHINGTON, DC - Congressman Steny Hoyer joined Special Olympics athlete Donna Moorleghen from LaPlata, and Members of Congress from the House of Representatives and the Senate today to unveil legislation to support and promote expansion of Special Olympics.

Maryland has a strong Special Olympics chapter with hundreds of athletes competing each year from all counties around the state. Special Olympics Maryland provides year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympics-type sports for people eight years of age and older with mental retardation and closely related developmental 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.

"Not only does the Special Olympics empower and improve the lives of the individual athletes who participate but it also plays a valuable role in reversing prejudices and stigmas that are too often unfairly put upon people with intellectual disabilities," said Congressman Hoyer. "The bill that we are announcing here today will play a small but important role in helping the Special Olympics reach the next step by building upon already successful programs."

At a news conference today on Capitol Hill to unveil the Special Olympics Sport Empowerment Act of 2004, Congressman Hoyer was joined by Mrs. Eunice Shriver, founder of Special Olympics, Myer Feldman, Member of the Executive Board of Directors, Special Olympics athlete Donna Moorleghen from LaPlata and athletes from across the United States.

Ken Brannan, a member of the Special Olympics Maryland Executive Committee, who attended the event today said, "there is a saying that there is more that unites America than divides it. This legislation is a perfect example of that saying and I want to especially thank Congressman Hoyer for his work on this bill. It is a landmark day for Special Olympics. This legislation will heighten awareness of what Special Olympics does and will hopefully get more people involved."

The Special Olympics Sport Empowerment Act of 2004 authorizes funding for five years including \$15 million for fiscal year 2005:

Provide support to Special Olympics and increase athlete participation in and public awareness

## Hoyer Unveils Bill to Fund Special Olympics

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about the Special Olympics movement;

Dispel negative stereotypes about people with intellectual disabilities;

Build athlete and family involvement through sport; and

Promote the extraordinary gifts of people with intellectual disabilities.

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