

Islanders among participants

Special Olympics open upstate amid fanfare

BROCKPORT, N.Y. (AP) — Celebrities spoke, two huge Soviet sculptures were dedicated, a special U.S. 15-cent stamp was commemorated. Then, amid much fanfare, Sen. Edward Kennedy declared the fifth International Summer Special Olympics under way Thursday evening.

More than 9,000 Special Olympics participants and fans squeezed into the new Brockport Special Olympics Stadium at the campus of Brockport State for

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opening ceremonies. About 3,000 attended the day's other major events.

Among the participants were at least a dozen Staten Island residents.

Thomas Prisco, who heads the Exceptional Children's Club on Staten Island, said three of last year's Special Olympic winners attended the ceremonies, and other Island organizations sent representatives.

On the dais were Gov. Hugh Carey and Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan at the stamp commemoration ceremony. An appearance by retired World Heavyweight Champion Muhammed Ali brought the crowd to its feet.

Ali, a last-minute participant in the program, said he reversed a decision to turn down all appearances for this week so he could attend the event.

"Now I'm so happy I came," Ali said, citing the spirit of the participants, who are "bent and determined" to compete to their fullest, "not letting physi-

cal handicaps hold them back."

Competing are mentally retarded youngsters and adults from the United States and more than 30 other nations. The event is sponsored by the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation, of which Sen. Kennedy is president.

Speaking at the stamp ceremony, Kennedy quipped, "I was elected president of the Kennedy Foundation because my family thought I should be president of something."

Kennedy has often been mentioned as a possible 1980 candidate for president of the United States.

But it is Kennedy's sister, Eunice Kennedy Shriver, who was the driving force behind the establishment of the Special Olympics, and who serves as president of the Special Olympics, Inc., the Olympics organizing body.

Ethel Kennedy, widow of the late Sen. Robert Kennedy, attended with several Kennedy children.

Ali, the Kennedys and other celebrities were swamped after the ceremonies by scores of autograph-seekers.

Most of the young athletes about the grounds appeared exuberant, shouting greetings to others and occasionally posing for photographs. Some were in wheelchairs, others on crutches, but most frolicked like youngsters anywhere.

One group from El Salvador tried out tentative English "hellos" on their American guides.

In a special "tent city" set up on the grounds, Special Olympics plunged in to disco dancing, country sing-alongs, and game and crafts booths. Many lined up at a booth to pose for pictures with human stars

and Star Wars character R2D2.

Ethel Kennedy, sporting a blue Superman T-shirt with the words "Special Olympians are Super Too," across the back, did her best to confer with a young group of Spanish-speaking participants, pausing to pose for snapshots.

Columnist Art Buchwald also obliged a group of beaming youngsters who were satisfied to learn he, too, was a celebrity.

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Others on hand were Marlo Thomas, Susan St. James and Phil Donahue, "Laverne and Shirley" stars Penny Marshall and Cindy Williams cancelled, but "Superman," Christopher Reeve and athletes Rafer Johnson and Arnold Schwarzenegger were scheduled to appear.

U.S. Postmaster General William F. Bolger dedicated the stamp, promising to send the first album mailed to President Carter through the U.S. Postal Service.

The stamp's designer, artist Jeff Cornell was one of several to receive commemorative albums in festivities.

Earlier, the Soviet Union's deputy minister of culture, E.M. Chekharin, presented two monumental sculptures created by Soviet artist Zurab Tsereteli as a gift to the United States in commemoration of the Special Olympics, the Soviet Union's first such gift to the country.