

Handicapped athletes go for the gold at special olympics

By JULIA I. MARTIN

Every participant became a celebrity at the first New York City Sectional Special Olympic meet yesterday on the grounds of the Staten Island Developmental Center in Willowbrook.

As a "special" aspect, all of the 350 handicapped athletes from ages 8 to 60 were winners, sporting a blue-and-gold participation medal on a red, white and blue ribbon hung around their necks, Olympic style.

And at the conclusion of the tailor-made physical activities, many of them also wore a second medal — gold (first place), silver (second) and bronze (third), according to their achievements.

The cameras of proud parents and other relatives and friends were busy clicking away during the morning and afternoon activities which included softball throw, broad jump, 50 and 200 meter dash, track and field and wheelchair events on the center's grounds, and bowling at Colonial Lanes, Rosebank.

At the finish of each activity, the par-

ticipants were also rewarded with enthusiastic clapping and cheering, hand shaking, hugs and kisses.

Although Staten Island has had its own Special Olympics annually for almost a decade, the idea for the interborough competition for special olympians without regard to skill level was conceived by Richard Salinardi of Eltingville, borough coordinator of Special Olympics, and Elin M. Howe, SIDC director.

Serving jointly as host for the weekend were the Staten Island Special Olympics and SIDC, with the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation as co-sponsor.

Salinardi, a teacher at the Occupational Training Center in Clifton, said yesterday, "Because of the interborough aspect of the meet, we can involve more kids who wouldn't ordinarily have the opportunity to go away for a weekend.

"And the coaches that work with the special olympians throughout the year in after-school, evening and Saturday programs at the training centers have the treat of spending a weekend of

sports, games and entertainment with them."

Salinardi added, "The spaciousness of the site at Willowbrook provided the opportunity for many area programs to bring their entire contingent for the first time."

He estimated the participants from the private sector and institutions as about 275 from Staten Island, and 75 from the other boroughs.

"As a result of the magnitude of this affair, we recruited hundreds of new volunteers this year," Salinardi said.

A hearty breakfast this morning concluded the weekend which, besides carefully programmed events, offered plenty of perfect weather and ample time for playing on the new spring grass, basking in the May sun, riding the merry-go-round, gliding through the air on swings, throwing frisbees and picking daisies.

Those for whom the weekend was memorable included Sherry Satran of Bulls Head, a recreational therapist at United Cerebral Palsy of Staten Island, and her charge, an 11-year-old girl with multiple handicaps who won a first place in the 25-meter wheelchair race.

As the little blonde girl with the Buster Brown haircut sat smiling in her wheelchair yesterday, alternately twirling her gold medal on its ribbon and clapping for other special olympians, Ms. Satran said, "I'm happy she was able to participate.

"She's having a ball, with the race today, and the fireworks, horse show, movie, and disco dancing Friday night. She was shouting with joy."