

ever seen. They're all winners," said Erika Shaver of Great Kills, one of a team of five 12-year-old girls who made their debut as cheerleaders yesterday under the sponsorship of Watkins-Kellett Post, American Legion.

Erika said she and the rest of her team — Jill Teitler, Lydia Lorenzo, Merrie Geig and Sharon Malagraph — had been practicing a half dozen cheers and a victory song for the special athletes every Saturday afternoon since January in each others' houses.

For the morning and afternoon contests, beginning at 9:15 a. m., the team sported red-and-blue pompons and wore uniforms of white shorts and "Special Olympics" T-shirts. Said Sharon afterwards, "We would like to do it again next year. I think it's a good way to spend the day — to see that they're happy."

The storybook weather that marked the debut of May yesterday fostered zest for the games and hearty appetites for the lunch — 600 hamburgers and 600 sodas provided by McDonald's Family Restaurants on Forest and on Richmond Avenues.

Other community organizations donated their services throughout the day, while individuals and business enterprises provided a wide-ranging program of entertainment.

Among the many individual volunteers was Deborah Rosenberg, 18, of Great Kills, who said she's "basically interested in the special population, and considering special education as a career actually." In the morning, she had chaperoned participants, and in the afternoon had rooted for the special athletes to "keep going."

She explained, "Everything



Cal Leonard presents a gold medal to a winner in the softball throw.

S.I. Advance photos by Chris Johns

here is important — the chaperones, the volunteers who are cheering on, patting backs, shaking hands, and congratulating the participants to make them feel that what they did was totally accomplished. As much as it means to win, it's worthwhile

that they finish the race itself."

A happy participant by the end of the afternoon was Debbie Ellis, 22, of Vanderbilt Ave., who wore three medals — a gold one for the broad jump, a silver medal for the race, and the participation medal.