



## PRESS RELEASE

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 8, 2023

## **Special Olympics New Jersey Summer Games Is Here** *Athletes Return to State-Level Competition*

Ewing, NJ – Special Olympics New Jersey (SONJ) is happy to announce the marquee event of the competition year and culmination of months of hard work by thousands of athletes, returns to the campus of The College of New Jersey (TCNJ) this weekend. SONJ Summer Games takes place from **Friday, June 9** through **Sunday, June 11**.

Over **2,000 athletes and Unified partners** from across the Garden State, representing all 21 counties divided into **13 areas**, will compete in [athletics \(track & field\)](#), [bocce](#), [gymnastics](#), [powerlifting](#), [softball](#), [swimming](#), and [tennis](#). Competitions will take place on TCNJ's campus, Armstrong Memorial Park, and Schafer Sports Center in Ewing.

The weekend's festivities kick-off early Friday morning around **4:45 a.m.**, as law enforcement officers, known as "**Guardians of the Flame**" take to the streets of their communities during the **40th annual [Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics New Jersey](#)**. More than **3,000 officers**, split up into **26 separate legs**, will carry the **Flame of Hope** to raise awareness for Special Olympics New Jersey.

The annual Torch Run culminates Friday evening at SONJ's signature kick-off to Summer Games, [Opening Ceremony](#). The ceremony begins at **7:30 p.m.** in Lions Stadium at TCNJ and all are welcome to attend. The ceremony will include a Parade of Athletes marching into the stadium, joined by some of our most loyal supporters, including numerous law enforcement officers. After the Parade of Athletes, select law enforcement officers and athletes will run with the Flame of Hope to light the cauldron, followed by a special appearance by SONJ athlete, DJ Redline, and a spectacular fireworks display.

Competitions will take place throughout the day on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday at the various venues and spectators are encouraged to attend to cheer on the athletes as they compete.

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In addition to competition, [Young Athletes™](#) will host developmental sports activities and a Future Stars Race for children ages 2-7 with intellectual disabilities; [Healthy Athletes](#) will offer athletes the opportunity to meet with healthcare professionals in vision, dental, hearing, podiatry, mindfulness, health education, and can receive concussion baseline screening. Athletes will have access to the Olympic Village and Athlete Experience, both of which offer fun activities for the athletes when they are not competing.

All the weekend's events are completely FREE of charge to the athletes who compete, including food, housing, entertainment, and health screenings. This and all SONJ events would not be possible without thousands of volunteers. Over **3,000** volunteers, including coaches, officials, clinicians, photographers, event support, and numerous other roles will be on hand throughout the weekend to support the athletes.

The 2023 SONJ Summer Games are greatly supported by Wakefern Food Corp./ShopRite, which donates lunch for everyone in attendance.

For a detailed event schedule, information about individual sports activities, and complete Summer Games coverage, visit: <https://www.sonjsummergames.org/>.

Following the 2023 SONJ Summer Games, photos will be available to download at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/sonewjersey/albums>.

Photos from the 2022 SONJ Summer Games may be found [here](#) and are available to use upon request.

To schedule an interview with SONJ President & CEO, Heather Andersen, or for a list of athletes competing from your coverage area, please contact Jeremy Davis at [jld@sonj.org](mailto:jld@sonj.org).

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### **ABOUT SPECIAL OLYMPICS NEW JERSEY:**

For over 50 years, Special Olympics New Jersey has provided year-round sports training and athletic competition in 24 Olympic-type sports for thousands of children and adults with intellectual disabilities, completely free of charge. Through the joy and power of sports, athletes are provided 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. Visit [www.sonj.org](http://www.sonj.org) for more information.