

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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**Spokane Mayor Mary Verner recognizes
Spokane resident and Special Olympics Washington athlete Mike Van Zee
Competing in the Special Olympics 2011 Summer World Games in Athens Greece**

SEATTLE - On June 13 Spokane Mayor Mary B. Verner, on behalf of the Spokane City Council, will read and present Spokane resident Mike Van Zee with a city proclamation declaring Monday, June 13, 2011 Mike Van Zee Day in the City of Spokane.

Mike is one of nine Special Olympics Washington athletes chosen to compete in the Special Olympics 2011 World Summer Games in Athens Greece, June 25 – July 4. He stands as the only Special Olympics Washington athlete from Spokane County going to the World Summer Games and will join his eight teammates from Washington State as Team Washington.

“Spokane is fortunate to have such a wonderful representative at this international event,” says Mayor Verner. “Through this proclamation, the community is joining Mike in spirit on this incredible journey, and we look forward to hearing of his success.”

Mike’s sport is power-lifting for the upcoming World Summer Games. He’s been involved with Special Olympics Washington for twenty-six years and is a participant in the City of Spokane Parks and Recreation Therapeutic Recreation Program. Mike has competed in a wide range of sports, including; speed skating, basketball, bowling, roller skating, and aquatics.

Mike has held a job at Taco Time for the last sixteen years, performed in a paid production of a play, and has been published in a magazine. In his free time, Mike likes to unwind by playing video or computer games, and listening to music.

The acknowledgement will take place during a Spokane City Council meeting at the West Central Community Center located at 1603 N Belt Street in Spokane on Monday, June 13. The program will start promptly at 6:00 p.m.

The Team Washington is scheduled for an early morning flight on June 18 from SeaTac to Baltimore, Maryland where they will link up with 419 Special Olympics athletes from all



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fifty states and two U.S. territories forming Team USA. Then they're off to Isle of Rhodes, Greece on June 19 in final preparation for the games and a ferry ride to Athens, where they will be joined by 7,500 Special Olympics Athletes from 185 nations competing in 22 Olympic-type sports.

Before flying off to the World Summer Games, Coca Cola of Bellevue will host a send off rally/celebration for Team Washington at their downtown Bellevue headquarters. Coca Cola employees and senior management will be on hand to wish them luck. Afterwards, Team Washington will travel to Safeco Field to be recognized and congratulated by the Seattle Mariners on a job well done and wishes of good luck in competition. The Mariners are hosting a suite where the athletes can relax, wolf down a few hot dogs and enjoy the game.

The Special Olympics World Games will be the crowning of a long lasting movement founded in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, who managed to realize her dream of global magnitude. Special Olympics World Games 2011 will bear a special significance. They will take place, without the presence of their founder, only two years after her death.

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