Novato’s Rivkin is ‘getting it done’

On July 20, 1968 Eunice Kennedy Shriver strode to the microphone at Soldier Field in Chicago and convened the first Special Olympic Games. She ended by reciting the Special Olympics oath: Let me win, But if I cannot win, Let me be brave in the attempt.

Since that day the Special Olympics has become a part of American culture and is also a part of Marin County.

A very special woman, Tracy Rivkin of Novato, has been instrumental in spearheading this cause in Marin and she is my recipient of the 2015 Look Who’s Getting It Done award.

Tracy and her family have lived in Novato for thirty years. Tracy became inspired to help people with developmental disabilities after watching a troubling television program about institutions for people with developmental disabilities. She began to volunteer with the Special Olympics.

To share a little about the Special Olympics – they are the world's largest sports organization for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, providing year-round training and competitions to more than 4.5 million athletes in 170 countries. The organization helps raise awareness and through sports, it showcases the skills and dignity of participating athletes. In addition, it brings people with and without intellectual disabilities together to see and take part in the transformative power of sports.

Since 2001, as Co-Manager and Volunteer Coordinator, Tracy has been a tremendous asset to the Special Olympic Marin Games. I have had the great pleasure of working with Tracy over the years as I've attended the Special Olympics Marin Games at Terra Linda High School. Last year 350 athletes from nine counties in Northern California participated. Tracy is clearly the behind the scenes guru bringing everything together from the bands playing (last year featured the Stanford University Band), to rest stops for the athletes, to Michael Pritchard’s inspiring speeches, to the coordination of over 300 volunteers that help make the event a success. In addition to all that, Tracy somehow finds the time to also be the Head Bowling Coach at the Marin Games.

With over 30 years of professional event and project management experience, Tracy has made an invaluable contribution to the organization and the success of the Special Olympic Marin Games.

Through her fundraising efforts in supporting the Special Olympics, Tracy realized that locally raised funds provided to the Special Olympics did not always stay in the Marin community. So in 2012, Tracy along with other concerned parents and volunteers from Marin launched “Marin’s Best”, a 501C3 that supports social, educational and athletic activities to enrich the lives of members of our local community who have developmental disabilities. One hundred percent of donations raised by Marin’s Best stay in Marin. Their efforts include: providing in-kind services, raising funds for Marin-based organizations like the Special Olympics Marin Games, expanding existing programs in the community, and partnering with other non-profit organizations to enhance experiences for the developmentally disabled.

There are approximately 200 million people with intellectual disabilities around the world and the organizations that Tracy works with are making great strides to reach and inspire these individuals. To learn more about these organizations, to learn about volunteer opportunities or to make a donation, visit: marinsbest.org and/or specialolympics.org.

Thank you Tracy Rivkin for your inspiring, tireless work. You truly are “Getting it Done”!

And finally, I want to take this opportunity to wish you a Happy New Year! Looking ahead in 2016, I look forward to working with you and addressing issues that are important to the community. A few of my priorities in the coming year include: the re-opening of the downtown Novato Theater which will not only be of great economic importance to our downtown but will also provide a community cultural center where live music, performing arts, film and simulcast showings can have a year-round venue in Novato; getting Phase 1 of SMART passenger rail service up and running as well as continuing efforts for Phase 2 service to Larkspur; and supporting Marin Strong Starts’ effort to provide quality preschool, daycare, and healthcare for all children in Marin County.