



Coach - Powerlifting Hometown: Bensenville, IL

1. How long have you been with Special Olympics?

I have been coaching Special Olympics sports since 2003 – a total of 18 years. I started my coaching Special Olympics sports at Misericordia in aquatics and then began to explore other sports to coach with other agencies involved with Special Olympics. I have since then gone on to coach basketball, floor hockey, volleyball, Unified powerlifting, soccer, snowshoe, bocce, gymnastics, bowling, track and field, Alpine ski, softball, golf, tennis, and flag football. I have participated in the Polar Plunge as well.

2. How has Special Olympics changed your life?

Special Olympics has changed my life by giving me a great level of fulfillment professionally as a coach and mentor to many athletes. I have always enjoyed building relationships with athletes, coaches, and the Special Olympic organization and its staff. I have had the honor of meeting and coaching many great athletes in my 18 years for Special Olympics.

3. What has been your biggest obstacle to overcome?

My greatest obstacle I had to overcome happened to me twice. I wanted to start a powerlifting team for two organizations I worked for. Misericordia being the first place I worked for and started coaching for and my current position at West Suburban Special Recreation Association as Special Olympics Coordinator and Inclusion Manager. Both organizations were very supportive in my initiative to want to start a new powerlifting program for them. Seeing both organizations benefit from the sport being added to their programs gave enrichment to the athletes.

4. What makes you most proud?

I have a few. I'm proud of being able to coach as many sports as I have with a few great organizations such as Misericordia and WSSRA. I'm proud to have introduced new sports to WSSRA such as powerlifting, bocce, and floor hockey, and seeing the success that it has brought to our agency and fulfillment and enjoyment it brings to our athletes. The greatest thing I am proud of is to have the privilege to coach athletes with their ups and downs and watching them grow with all their experiences they get from sports.



5. What are some other accomplishments you are proud of?

In 2001, I got first place in the IHSA wrestling Regionals. I was high school Athlete of the Year in 2003. I got my bachelor's degree from Northeastern University in 2012 in health and wellness. I minored in physical education. In 2011, I received National Excellence in Leadership Award with the National Society of Leadership and Success.

6. What other interests or hobbies do you have?

Spending time with my family, wife, and three kids. My interests include reading, golf, exercise, and developing my home improvement skills.

7. Who do you admire most and why?

I admire my mom, Debra Sturm. When I was seven years old, she began a new career with Misericordia as a DSP without ever having worked in the field of caring for others with special needs. My mom opened the door for me to see what it means to work with some extraordinary people and never to turn away from new adventures. Michael Jordan is another person I looked up to as a kid. Not because he was the greatest basketball athlete of all time but because of the love of the sport and dedication he had and how much he worked at it to build one of the greatest NBA franchises in the 90's and he didn't do it alone. Michael Jordan inspired others on the Bulls to put in the same effort as he did and never settling and to leave it all on the court.

8. What does attending USA Games mean to you?

Attending as a USA Games as a powerlifting coach is the greatest honor that I have been asked to assist with. Certainly being able to coach at this level is the next progression in my coaching career for Special Olympics, which means the world to me. I'm looking forward most of all to meeting the athletes and being able to coach them at this level for Special Olympics.

9. How are you preparing/training for USA Games?

I'm making sure to ask a lot of questions and am learning the process of USA Games and what expectations are required from me. I'm making sure I stay healthy by exercising and eating well. I'm coming up with a few powerlifting workouts for our USA Games athletes.

10. Have you been to a World Games or USA Games before?

None

11. Are you employed? If so, where at and what's your role?

I'm employed with West Suburban Special Reaction Association as their Inclusion Manager/ Special Olympics Coordinator.

12. Are you a currently a student? If so, where and is it a Unified Champion School?

N/A

