

i am sam asks “who are you?”

Sean Penn and company give us questions to ponder and a film to honor.

by Sandy Cogan

It was moving and compelling ... the kind of sensitive, thought-provoking film that makes grown men cry and leaves viewers of all ages wrestling with the question of what gives meaning to their lives. That kind of poignancy woven with delightful comic relief is what *i am sam* brought to student and VIP audiences at its Washington, D.C., premiere

showings 22 January at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center to benefit Special Olympics.

The film, showcased at morning and evening screenings presented by Special Olympics, AOL Time Warner and New Line Cinema, tells the story of a single, mentally challenged father (exquisitely played by Sean Penn) who battles the legal system with the help of his hard-nosed lawyer (beautifully depicted by Michelle Pfeiffer) in an attempt to regain custody of his 7-year old daughter.

Students and evening guests undoubtedly got the film’s message — that we are more alike than not and need to notice each other’s gifts, not disabilities.

In a discussion following the morning viewing, students demanded acceptance of others with these comments: “We need

to be more patient [with one another].” [We should remember] that “everyone has a disability.” “After watching the movie, you’ll think twice about calling someone stupid.” “Love makes petty differences unimportant.”

A panel of the film’s celebrities responded to students’ queries. Sean Penn noted that in



PHOTOS BY LARRY EVNI

Actors from the movie, *i am sam*, Sean Penn and Brad Allan Silverman, also a Special Olympics athlete, participated in a discussion with local high school students following the morning screening.

his own encounters with grown men with mental challenges, the only differences he noticed were personality differences. An actor who played his friend in the movie, Brad Allan Silverman, a Special Olympics athlete who has Down syndrome, pleaded with the audience to consider “loving everyone” after an emotional recitation of the Special Olympics oath. Students, with tears in their eyes, applauded Silverman and nodded agreement. Special Olympics athlete Ricardo Thornton, also a panel member, described the positive impact of Special Olympics on his life and implored the audience: “If you have a gift, use it.”

Michelle Pfeiffer added to the entourage of celebrities at the evening benefit screening which drew dignitaries, business leaders and other VIPs, many of whom described the film as “extraordinary.” “Sam’s wisdom, genuineness and incredible love of his child took my breath away,” said one. “Sam made me question my own priorities,” said another.

No doubt, the film trumpeted the essence of Special Olympics: that all people are valuable, that we are more alike than different and that differences are to be celebrated. Hopefully, Sam will teach a world of filmgoers these important truths. □



Michelle Pfeiffer (left) greets Special Olympics athlete Ricardo Thornton and his wife Donna at the evening benefit screening of *i am sam*.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT AWARD

Eunice Kennedy Shriver is feted with the NCAA's most distinguished award

by **Scott Deckman**

On 13 January Special Olympics Founder and Honorary Chairman Eunice Kennedy Shriver received the 2002 Theodore Roosevelt Award—the highest honor the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) bestows on an individual. Shriver, who is also Executive Vice President of the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation, became the 35th recipient of the award at the NCAA Honors Dinner in Indianapolis, Indiana, USA.

The award, also known as the “Teddy,” is presented annually to distinguished citizens who earned a varsity athletic award in their college days and later made outstanding contributions to physical fitness or the collegiate/amateur sporting world during their lifetime.

The award is named after U.S. President Theodore “Teddy” Roosevelt, who had an exceptional interest in the conduct of intercollegiate athletics, and played a key role in the inception of the NCAA in 1906.

Past “Teddy” honorees have included U.S. presidents and leaders of education, business, government, industry and entertainment, among them William S. Cohen, Bill Cosby, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Althea Gibson, Jesse Owens, Ronald Reagan and John R. Wooden.

Shriver had this to say about her award. “I see this award as ... a tribute not to me but to the spirit of Special Olympics and to a new call to freedom and to a new call to caring and love.”

Shriver has been a leader in the worldwide struggle to improve and enhance the lives of individuals with mental retardation for more than four decades, most visibly through the joy of sport. It was for this work that she received the Teddy. □



BRETT WILHELM CARLSON PHOTOGRAPHY

Eunice Kennedy Shriver accepts the NCAA's Roosevelt award for her accomplishments with Special Olympics at the NCAA Honors Dinner at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis, Indiana, USA.

REACH FOR THE STARS

Universal Studios partners with Special Olympics for *E.T.*'s 20th Anniversary re-release.

by **Scott Deckman**

For kids of the '70s, one of the most indelible theatre experiences was watching a cute alien with a glowing finger bond with a cute-as-honey Gertie (Drew Barrymore) and her older brother Elliot (played by Henry Thomas) up on the big screen. *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* taught many a valuable lesson. The lovable alien taught us it's okay to be different looking and sounding, it's okay to be from places foreign (indeed, outer space even), he taught us to look on the inside for real beauty, that the heart and soul means so much more than outer veneer. In that vein, Special Olympics is proud to join Universal Studios and Amblin Entertainment in celebration of the movie's 20th anniversary re-release.

It's hard to believe it's been 20 years since that little extraterrestrial expanded peoples' consciousness and touched their hearts with his lighted-finger-hiding-in-the-closet-posing-as-a-doll-fooling-the-mom antics, but it has. It also may be a surprise to some that Special Olympics and *E.T.* have had a 20-year relationship which began when Eunice Kennedy Shriver and producer/director Steven Spielberg worked together to promote Special Olympics. As a result, Universal Studios released a public service announcement that raised awareness about Special Olympics athletes and touched the hearts of a nation.

The partnership will be a year-long event, kicking off with the movie's re-release on 22 March 2002. *E.T.* is pegged for showings in more than 50 countries worldwide, with the premiere taking place on 16 March at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles, California, USA. The partnership will also include various other promotional activities. □



For more about *E.T.*'s re-release, visit:
www.specialolympics.org
 and www.et20.com

CASHING IN FOR CHINA

Wal-Mart holds Special Olympics Day to benefit Special Olympics China

by **Kirk Miles**

Wal-Mart's Special Olympics Day, held in the parking lot of Sam's Club in Shenzhen, China, on 10 November, was by all measures a great success. Public awareness and much-needed funds were generated for both Special Olympics China and the Special Olympics China National Games, scheduled to be held in ancient Xian from 1-6 September 2002. In fact, by day's end, RMB1.11million (US\$134,220) had been added to the coffers of the Program and the Games as 70 Special Olympics athletes found the spotlight and appreciation for their dance routines and in-line skating demonstrations.



Olympic champion Yueling Chan prepares to address the Wal-Mart associates.

The event, which marked the fifth anniversary of Wal-Mart operations in China, also drew sports and entertainment celebrities. Tian Zhen, one of the top pop singers in China, and Yueling Chen, a 1992 Olympic gold medalist in the Woman's 10km Race Walking, were on hand to rev up the audience with added excitement. A local band and many Wal-Mart associates provided entertainment to ensure a successful event.

The 1st Wal-Mart China Tug-of-War and Rope Skipping Championships made their debut as Special Olympics representatives Kirk Miles and George Smith served as judges of this very heated series of competitions. Sixteen teams participated in the rope skipping and tug-of-war events with the contests being so fierce that the tug-of-war matches lasted two hours.

Due to the success of *Wal-Mart's Special Olympics Day*, there are now plans to duplicate this unique event at other stores opening up throughout China. The event marked the first time Wal-Mart has singled out Special Olympics China as the focus of a promotional event. The relationship with Wal-Mart in China began with its sponsorship of the Special Olympics China Millennium March in May 2000.

More than 1,000 Wal-Mart associates from headquarters and six stores in Shenzhen, vendors, local Special Olympics athletes, Special Olympics China and Special Olympics staff, as well as representatives from the 2002 Special Olympics China National Games Organizing Committee, participated in the event.

As Wal-Mart China plans an aggressive expansion in China over the next few years, store grand opening promotions to benefit Special Olympics China are being discussed and commitments for other events are being made. □

Kirk Miles is Director of External Affairs for Special Olympics East Asia/Chinese Programs.

PRESIDENTIAL DECREE

Special Olympics Poland team recognized by President

by **Kalina Sekula**

Shortly after the 2001 Special Olympics World Winter Games, Polish President Alexander Kwasniewski and First Lady Jolanta warmly welcomed the Special Olympics Poland delegation to the Presidential Palace, showering the athletes and coaches with accolades on their performance at the World Winter Games in Anchorage, Alaska, USA, and awarding national distinctions to a number of individuals involved in Special Olympics Poland.



Polish President Alexander Kwasniewski welcomes athlete Tomasz Popielec.

Kwasniewski recognized the efforts of the Program in developing an effective sports organization for people with mental retardation. □

Kalina Sekula is the Program Coordinator and Development Director for Special Olympics Poland.



Role Model

Superstar tennis pro Monica Seles (left) has been a Special Olympics supporter since the 1995 Special Olympics World Summer Games. Special Olympics Connecticut athlete and Global Messenger Drusilla Sniffin (right) along with fellow tennis athletes

presented Seles with a personally signed award for her courage and continued efforts to inspire greatness in athletes around the world. Sniffin spoke on behalf of athletes during the Hartford FoxForce World Team Tennis Home Opener where the award was presented. "Monica has shown us with her courage that if we work hard we can overcome our problems and become better athletes and good sports," declared Sniffin.

SILENCE is GOLDEN

Gala fundraiser makes National Games possible for Special Olympics Australia athletes

by **Maryann Shine**

the National Games in Sydney in September 2002. Remaining monies will help employ part-time development officers for special schools in New South Wales.

Rex Langthorne, Executive Director of Special Olympics Australia, was noticeably pleased with the outcome, saying "With the increased funds, we will be able to foster new Programs, and we hope to increase participation significantly in the coming years."

Leading Australian radio personality and Deputy Commissioner of the Australian Sports Commission Alan Jones was the evening's master of ceremonies, and newly appointed Governor-General of Australia, the Right Reverend Dr. Peter Hollingworth, was that night's honored guest. Hollingworth said, "Special Olympics offers Australians with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to achieve in ways they and their families never thought possible. At one level, that involves improving physical fitness. But clearly, the chance to participate affects people's lives far more deeply and broadly than that. It boosts confidence and provides a sense of camaraderie. It makes people feel that they belong."

Another inspiring guest was Special Olympics athlete Gabrielle Clark who wowed the crowd with her much-quoted "label me able" declaration. Special Olympics President and CEO Timothy Shriver spoke by videotape, reinforcing the fact that now more than ever in these troubled times, the work of Special Olympics is vitally important.

Among the wide array of auction items, one piece auctioned that evening was an exclusive print of Australia's late great cricketing legend, Sir Donald Bradman. Internationally renowned orthopedic surgeon Dr. Merv Cross purchased the item, insisting the print find its home on the walls of Government House, Canberra, the home of Hollingworth.

The evening was sponsored by SAS. □

Maryann Shine is Events Manager for Special Olympics Australia.

The more than 200 sponsors, supporters and friends of Special Olympics Australia who packed the ballroom of the ANA Hotel on 13 October in Sydney for the Program's major fundraising dinner didn't know just how successful the event would be. In fact, proceeds from the gala dinner and silent auction pulled in AUD40,000 (US\$21,000) the bulk of which will help athletes attend



Dinner sponsor SAS Managing Director Gordon Clubb with Special Olympics athlete Saxon Graham.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SPECIAL OLYMPICS AUSTRALIA

DREAMS TAKE FLIGHT

Donate your Delta frequent flier miles and athletes fly free

by **Kathy Mejasich**

Delta Air Lines recently selected Special Olympics to participate in its SkyWish® Charity of the Quarter program. The Charity of the Quarter mileage donation program is designed to spotlight partners like Special Olympics who promote youth wellness, leadership and development in order to make a difference in someone's life.

Special Olympics' status as Charity of the Quarter will begin on 1 April and conclude on 30 June. During the period, SkyMiles members will have the opportunity to donate their frequent flier miles (minimum of 5,000) to Special Olympics. Miles will be used to help transport athletes to major competitions and events, including the 2003 Special Olympics World Summer Games in Dublin, Ireland. Delta will add 1,000 miles for every 5,000 miles contributed to Special Olympics. After the term as Charity of the Quarter has expired, SkyMiles members can still continue to donate to Special Olympics as long as the Special Olympics account remains active.

Donations can be made via e-mail at delta.bids@delta.com, by calling 1-800-325-3999 or via fax at (404) 773-1945. For more information on the Delta's SkyWish Charity of the Quarter program, visit: www.delta.com/skymiles/sm_programs/skywish/index.jsp. □

Kathy Mejasich is Senior Manager of Corporate Accounts for Special Olympics North America.