



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Special Olympics Athletes Return Home from 2009 World Winter Games with 16 Medals

Team USA Included Athletes from Fresno, San Jose and Tahoe areas

PLEASANT HILL, Calif. – Nine Northern California athletes have returned home with a load of gold, silver and bronze medals from the 2009 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Boise, Idaho.

The nine Northern California athletes were among 300 athletes who attended the week-long winter games as part of Team USA. They joined more than 2,500 Special Olympians representing more than 100 countries.

“Our athletes were so thankful to have this opportunity,” said Matt Cohen, Vice Presidents of Sports for Special Olympics Northern California. “They performed at their best and were proud of their achievements, but meeting other athletes from all over the world definitely was a highlight.”

Here are the results of the nine Northern California athletes who competed on behalf of Special Olympics Team USA Feb. 7-13:

Philip Sturgeon, a 34-year-old alpine skier from South Lake Tahoe, struck gold in the Advanced Giant Slalom, Slalom and Super G.

Andrew Chiang, a 27-year-old from Campbell, finished first in the 800-meter snow shoeing event, third in the 4x400M relay and fourth in the 400M event.

Diane Cunningham, a 22-year-old from San Jose, struck gold in the 4x400M snow shoeing relay, and third in the 800M race.

Maggie Hernandez, a 23-year-old alpine skier from Fresno, finished first in the Novice Slalom and third in the Giant Slalom.

Holley Matlack, a 32-year-old cross country skier from El Dorado Hills, finished second in the 4X1K Relay Freestyle and third in the 3K Race Classical.

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Aaron McLain, a 33-year-old cross country skier from Fresno, finished second in the 500 M Race Freestyle.

Ulises Ortiz, an 18-year-old snowboarder from Fresno, finished fourth in three events - the Intermediate Giant Slalom, Slalom and Super G.

Jared Schmidt, a 27-year-old alpine skier from Fresno, finished second in three events – Advanced Giant Slalom, Slalom and Super G.

Jared Aust, a 22-year-old snowboarder from Fresno, finished second in the Intermediate Giant Slalom and fourth in the Slalom.

Selection of the World Games athletes was based on results from our Special Olympics Northern California Winter championship games hosted at Kirkwood Ski Resort last year. In order to qualify for World Games, athletes had to compete at a regional competition and then advance to championship level of play. Each state or region is given a number of slots for each given sport. The names of all gold medal winners are compiled and then randomly selected for World Games competition.

About Special Olympics Northern California

Special Olympics Northern California is a free year-round sports training and competition program for children and adults with developmental disabilities. More than 13,000 athletes compete in over 170 competitions throughout the region in 15 sports. Find out how you can be a fan and visit www.sonc.org

About Special Olympics

Special Olympics is an international nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering individuals with intellectual disabilities to become physically fit, productive and respected members of society through sports training and competition. Founded in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Special Olympics provides year-round sports training and competition to nearly 3 million adults and children with intellectual disabilities across 180 countries. The Special Olympics movement offers one of the world's greatest platforms for acceptance and inclusion for all people—regardless of race, religion, ethnicity or cultural differences. Find out how you can become involved at www.specialolympics.org.

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