



**Special Olympics**  
*Northern California & Nevada*

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**High stakes and ideal snow conditions await athletes for the 2008 Special Olympics Winter Games at Kirkwood Mountain Resort**

**Kirkwood, CA – March 7, 2008** The stakes will be high and the snow conditions should be perfect for 187 Special Olympic athletes who will be competing for the gold at the 2008 Winter Games at Kirkwood Mountain Resort. Athletes who win gold medals have the opportunity to qualify for the World Games to be held in Idaho in 2009. The World Games is expected to attract up to 3,000 athletes from more than 85 nations.

“I’m really excited about the possibility of qualifying for the World Games,” said three-time Winter Games alpine athlete Barry Gee. “I know I have to win gold at Kirkwood in order to have a chance to go to the World Winter Games and compete with athletes from around the world.”

Gee, 22, has experience on his side, but he will have to compete for only one of two slots allocated to men alpine skiers in the Northern California area. It’s *that* intense. There also will be only one slot available for a female alpine skier to advance. Similarly, only one male and female will move on in the disciplines of snowboarding, cross-country-skiing and snowshoeing.

Opening ceremonies for the Winter Games at Kirkwood begin on Monday evening March 10 with a torchlight parade followed by fireworks. Competitions follow on Tuesday-Thursday, March 11-13 where athletes from throughout Northern California and Nevada will compete in four different sports: alpine skiing, cross country skiing, snowboarding and snowshoeing.

“This year’s Winter Games promises to be action-packed and full of emotion,” explained Jenny Choo, competition director for the Special Olympics Winter Games at Kirkwood. “The athletes have been training hard and the coaches report that everyone is really hyped up for the games. Kirkwood provides such a fantastic venue and some 250 volunteers – most of whom are local and love working with our athletes - truly make this a memorable event.”

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The Special Olympic Winter Games have become a welcomed tradition at Kirkwood Mountain Resort with the area hosting the event for the last 12 years. Currently boasting more snow than any other resort in Lake Tahoe, Kirkwood's mountain operation crews are predicting ideal conditions at both the downhill and cross-country venues.

"With this season's snowfall total now well over 400 inches, this event is a perfect opportunity for our guests to cheer on some amazing competitors and sneak a few turns in on the slopes at Kirkwood," said Chris Eckert, Special Events Manager for Kirkwood. "Our staff looks forward to working with the incredible volunteers from Northern California Special Olympics and we hope to continue this partnership for years to come."

For more information on the Northern California Special Olympics event at Kirkwood Mountain Resort, please visit [www.kirkwood.com](http://www.kirkwood.com) or [www.sonc.org](http://www.sonc.org). For lodging accommodations, contact Kirkwood lodging at 209.258.7293 or online at [www.kirkwood.com](http://www.kirkwood.com).

### **About Special Olympics Northern California & Nevada**

Special Olympics Northern California & Nevada is a free year-round sports training and competition program for children and adults with developmental disabilities. More than 16,000 athletes compete in 178 competitions throughout the region in 19 sports. This requires the extraordinary support and time of 12,700 volunteers and more than 4,600 volunteer coaches. Programs are free to all eligible athletes. Financial support comes almost exclusively from individuals, organizations, corporations, and foundations.

### **About Kirkwood Mountain Resort**

Celebrating its 35th season, Kirkwood Mountain Resort is becoming one of the Nation's top year-round family destination lifestyle resorts with an extensive master plan now underway to ensure the uncrowded private retreat's appeal. The secluded resort community is located at a base elevation of 7,800 only 177 miles from the Bay Area along scenic Highway 88 where it receives more annual snowfall than any other Tahoe resort. Known for its pristine beauty, action-packed mountain full of expeditions and events, winter fun includes skiing, snowboarding, cross country skiing, snow shoeing, sled dog tours, ice skating and more. In the summer, it has hiking, fishing, horseback riding, mountain bike park, zip line, ropes course, disc golf and more. An ideal location for weddings and corporate meetings, the Kirkwood Villages round out the action with boutique shopping, live music and dining.

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