

Beatty named grand marshal of parade

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Contributing writer

On Saturday, Aug. 2, long-time Lake City resident Norm Beatty and his wife, Sandi, will ride in the lead car of the Dan Rice Days parade and be recognized for Norm Beatty's 20 years of service to the Special Olympics basketball program as a coach at Elk Valley Elementary School.

His passion for these special athletes and the Special Olympics basketball program began many years ago when he responded to an ad in the Cosmopolite Herald seeking coaches to work with the kids.

"The rest is history," Norm Beatty said with a laugh. "I developed such an attachment to these kids, and we have so much fun together. The friendships we have built and the good times we've enjoyed are priceless!"

So for 20 years, he has been working with these athletes weekly during the winter to help them develop skills that will enable them to compete at a level that is appropriate for each individual.



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Special Olympics coach Norm Beatty, right, has been named grand marshal of this year's Dan Rice Days parade. Beatty is shown with athlete Amy Murphy. Beatty hosts a Special Olympics tournament at Elk Valley Elementary School.

His Special Olympics basketball players are sorted by skill level and placed in appropriate com-

petitive situations. Some teams are five-on-five for the higher functioning athletes; some teams

are three-on-three for athletes who need a bit more help.

See Parade, P. 2

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Contributed photo
Special Olympics coach Norm Beatty, third from right, of Lake City, has been named grand marshal of this year's Dan Rice Days parade. Beatty is with his assistant coaches. From left are John Hughes, Andrew Redburn, Andrew Phelps, Beatty, Bob Hammer and Bob Heath.

Parade

Continued from Page 1

"Being around these kids and watching them have so much fun and get so excited when they learn a new skill or receive a shiny medal just puts a smile on my face," Norm Beatty said. "It's always rewarding to watch the kids develop over the season."

A scrimmage at the end of most practices and an end-of-the-year tournament either in Clarion or Girard give them a chance to use the skills they've learned.

Saturday, July 26, will mark the 13th anniversary of Beatty's Special Party for Special People that he and Sandi host at their home each year to raise money to support the program.

"We use these funds to purchase new uniforms for the kids or have a special party during the year," Norm Beatty said. "We also are able to buy special awards or recognitions for the kids."

Norm Beatty has found his

reward watching the program grow over the years and having a hand in signing on new volunteers who love the opportunity to work with the kids as much as he does. Norm Beatty laughs hilariously as he recalls the time he challenged a group of local men who have been staunch supporters of his special party for years to a scrimmage against his special athletes.

"So here I now have a bunch of guys who haven't had a pair of gym shorts on in many, many years," he said with a chuckle. "And we had an absolute blast. Five or six of them came back to help out with practices because they loved being with these kids."

Is he honored to be selected as grand marshal in this year's parade? Sure. But for Beatty, his greatest honor is the privilege of working season after season with his team of special athletes who give it their all each week to be the best they can be.