



## **Ron Jon Surf Shop and Special Olympics Florida Begin Second Surfing Program With New Athletes**

**COCOA BEACH, Fla. -- (September 9, 2010) --** The first-ever Special Olympics-sanctioned surfing program kicks off its second series of lessons with a new crop of athletes tomorrow. The inaugural program, which featured eight athletes culminated Tuesday, July 13 with a surfing competition before hundreds of supportive spectators and family members.

The program, which was developed as a partnership between Special Olympics Florida and Ron Jon Surf Shop, launched June 5 with an afternoon of instruction and education for the athletes and continued with weekly lessons at the Cocoa Beach, Fla.-based Ron Jon Surf School.

The surfing program provides one-on-one interaction between the Special Olympics athletes and the experienced team of professionals at the surf school and offered water safety education and fun on the beach.

The program is managed by surf-industry veteran Craig Carroll, whose Ron Jon Surf School is the largest and most experienced surf academy in Florida and the Southeast. Carroll, a former professional surfer who has surfed in Cocoa Beach for more than 40 years, has operated the surf school since 1993.

"We are thrilled with the results from the first class, and we know that their experiences have generated a great deal of interest throughout the Special Olympics community," said Carroll. "Seeing the excitement in their eyes and watching their confidence grow was inspiring to all who participated."

For Special Olympics Florida, successfully completing this first surfing class has opened the door for expansion and growth, and the potential of bringing the sport to a global audience for Special Olympics.

In addition to the second class starting in Cocoa Beach, Special Olympics Florida and Ron Jon Surf Shop will also begin classes with a new group of Special Olympics athletes in Jacksonville and Stuart.

"Our athletes have once again shattered the stereotype of what people with intellectual disabilities are capable of. In just a few weeks, they became legitimate surfers and sparked a wave of interest throughout Special Olympics," said Special Olympics Florida President Monty Castevens, adding "Ron Jon Surf Shop has set in motion something that has great potential to benefit many, many more Special Olympics athletes, all while giving them the skills to enjoy the sport of surfing with their friends, families, and the broader surfing community, for the rest of their lives."

Ron Jon Surf Shop will provide all gear and equipment necessary and cover all costs associated with the program.

"It has been exciting for us to watch the progress of the athletes as they not only got up on the surfboards, but also learned about the surfing lifestyle and formed bonds with their surf instructors," said Debbie Harvey, president and COO of Ron Jon Surf Shop. "We are proud to have been a part of this inaugural surfing program and look to be a catalyst in its ongoing development and growth."

### **About Special Olympics Florida**

Special Olympics Florida provides year-round sports training and competition to children and adults with intellectual disabilities, at no cost to the athlete or their caregiver, as a means to achieve physical fitness, self-esteem, socialization skills, and the life skills necessary to be a productive, respected and contributing members of their communities.

To learn more, visit [www.specialolympicsflorida.org](http://www.specialolympicsflorida.org).

### **About Ron Jon Surf Shop**

Ron Jon Surf Shop was founded in 1959 by surfing enthusiast Ron DiMenna. Two years later, he opened a tiny oceanside shop in Long Beach Island, N.J. The lifestyle-apparel and board-sports-equipment retailer has since opened stores in Cocoa Beach, Ft. Lauderdale, Orlando, Ft. Myers, Key West, Panama City Beach, Fla., as well as Myrtle Beach, S.C. The flagship store in Cocoa Beach is the world's largest surf shop. It operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

### **For more information:**

Ryan Julison, Ron Jon Surf Shop, (321) 377-6877

Amie Dugan, Special Olympics Florida, (407) 402-8599