



**Special Olympics Florida and Ron Jon Surf Shop to Host First-Ever
Statewide Surfing Competition for Special Olympics Athletes**

COCOA BEACH, Fla. -- (October 19, 2010) -- The inaugural Special Olympics-sanctioned surfing program, the first of its kind in the world, has grown quickly since its June 5 kick-off which featured a group of eight athletes in Cocoa Beach.

The program has grown so quickly, in fact, that Ron Jon Surf Shop will soon play host to the first-ever Statewide Surfing Competition, which also marks the next step in the process of making surfing an official Special Olympics sport.

The statewide competition will be held Sunday, Oct. 24 in Cocoa Beach and will feature 25 Special Olympics athletes from Jacksonville, Stuart and Cocoa Beach.

Almost immediately after the first surfing class concluded, a second class began in Cocoa Beach with a new group of Special Olympics athletes and athletes in Jacksonville and Stuart also took part in their own surfing program.

The surfing program has featured one-on-one interaction between the Special Olympics athletes and the experienced team of professionals at the surf schools around the state and offered both water safety education and fun on the beach.

The program is being developed 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. Teams of instructors and volunteers have brought surfing to life for athletes in Jacksonville and Stuart.

"We knew from the very beginning that these athletes would not only enjoy this new experience, they would thrive on the waves and truly learn how to surf," said Carroll. "I have been thrilled to watch this sport take off with these athletes in Florida and we are excited at the possibility of helping bring surfing to Special Olympics athletes both around the U.S. and the world."

For Special Olympics Florida, successfully completing this first stage of surfing classes and hosting a statewide surfing competition opens the door for further expansion and growth, and the hope of bringing the sport to a global audience for Special Olympics.

"Our athletes have once again shattered the stereotype of what people with intellectual disabilities are capable of. They have embraced the sport of surfing and it has spread quickly through our statewide ranks." said Special Olympics Florida President Monty Castevens, adding "Together, with Ron Jon Surf Shop, we have 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 has covered all costs associated with the program and will provide all gear and equipment necessary for the statewide competition.

"It has been very meaningful for us to not only watch the progress of the athletes but to see the excitement and energy as the program has continued to grow," said Debbie Harvey, president and COO of Ron Jon Surf Shop. "Surfing has proven to be a fun and enjoyable activity for many Special Olympics athletes and we look forward to what the future holds."

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.

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.

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