

## TRIUMPH FOR SA DISABLED ATHLETES

The Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport (DCAS) is celebrating our victories by committing us to representivity and participation of people with disabilities to be incorporated in all strategies adopted by those involved in sport and recreation. The inclusion of disability in sport codes creates an integrated approach between participants and associations within the able-bodies and disabled sectors and ensures level playing fields without discrimination or prejudice. It also educates the mainstream sector by exposing them to various sport codes and events. Apart from receiving uniform and accessible facilities, the people with disabilities are also playing a role in all decision-making processes concerning sport.

Recently the Sport Promotion unit at DCAS had a welcome-back and send-off ceremony for various disciplines within sport for the disabled. Sad to report, Sport for the Disabled is a sector within civil society that hardly ever receives the acknowledgement that it deserves. We often do not know about the accolades that athletes with disabilities bring back to our Province and our country because they are not exposed on the same platform as other athletes.

### **But now we have an opportunity to boast about our athletes:**

- ♦ The South African Downs Syndrome team competed in Mexico from 6–11 September 2010, and the athletes residing in the Western Cape returned with four medals out of the six that the South African team won. The 2 athletes are Leonard Bailey and Maritza Holdt. The only gold medal came from Leonard Bailey. Out of the 19 countries that participated, South Africa earned the 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the world. This is the first time that a South African Downs Syndrome team returned with medals of this level. The main coach of the team, Rachel Williams, also resides in the Western Cape.
- ♦ The SA Football Intellectually Impaired tournament was held in Limpopo, where Team SA won two out of their three games. They competed against Poland, South Korea and Portugal. Our team beat South Korea with 15–0 and also triumphed over Portugal with 5–1, but unfortunately lost against Poland. Tariqu Fataar from Western Province scored a hat-trick against the team of South Korea and the South African team was positioned 7<sup>th</sup> out of 9 countries.



The national swimming team also participated with 164 swimmers in Taiwan on 29 September 2010 in the 5<sup>th</sup> World Swimming Championship for people with Downs Syndrome. The 12-member team arrived with high hopes of matching or even improving their previous performances at Albufeira in Portugal 2008. They have done very well against some tough opposition from Australia and Great Britain. Johan Hugo from the Western Cape has broken the South African Record for 200m breaststroke and Pietie Bell did the same with the 200m individual medley.

We indeed celebrate our investment in disabled persons. Not only does it provide a platform for training and opportunities, but it also installs a sense of purpose and pride. Remember - on 3 December people throughout the world commemorate International Disabled Persons' Day to promote the equal enjoyment of human rights and participation in society by people with disabilities.

DCAS proudly participates in renewing our pledge through the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 13 December 2006. South Africa is one of the member states who signed this document to promote respect for the inherent dignity and freedom of all people with disabilities. Article 30 of the Convention highlights equal participation in cultural life and sport as follows:

- ◆ Recognize the right of persons with disabilities to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy access to cultural materials in accessible formats, television programmes, films, theatre and other cultural activities, in accessible formats, places for cultural performances or services, such as theatres, museums, cinemas, libraries and tourism services, and, as far as possible, enjoy access to monuments and sites of national cultural importance.
- ◆ Take appropriate measures to enable persons with disabilities to have the opportunity to develop and utilize their creative, artistic and intellectual potential, not only for their own benefit, but also for the enrichment of society.
- ◆ Take all appropriate steps, in accordance with international law, to ensure that laws protecting intellectual property rights do not constitute an unreasonable or discriminatory barrier to access by persons with disabilities to cultural material.
- ◆ Persons with disabilities to be entitled, on an equal basis with others, to recognition and support of their specific cultural and linguistic identity, including sign languages and deaf culture.
- ◆ With a view to enabling persons with disabilities to participate on an equal basis with others in recreational, leisure and sporting activities, we shall take appropriate measures.
- ◆ To encourage and promote the participation, to the fullest extent possible, of persons with disabilities in mainstream sporting activities at all levels
- ◆ To ensure that persons with disabilities have an opportunity to organize, develop and participate in disability-specific sporting and recreational activities and, to this end, encourage the provision, on an equal basis with others, of appropriate instruction, training and resources.
- ◆ To ensure that persons with disabilities have access to sporting, recreational and tourism venues.
- ◆ To ensure that children with disabilities have equal access with other children to participation in play, recreation and leisure and sporting activities, including those activities in the school system.
- ◆ To ensure that persons with disabilities have access to services from those involved in the organization of recreational, tourism, leisure and sporting activities.