Editor’s Note: Greetings!! Welcome to the inaugural edition of the new Area 26 newsletter. We are trying a new format (we will also be changing communication platforms…) and hope that it and a more regular publishing schedule will help the community improve communications and highlight some of the very special activities going on in our large, diverse region. We plan to feature one sport each month throughout the year. Our first sport – Volleyball!

Volleyball

Our program is starting its fourth season (second with multiple teams participating). The teams play in the Fall and are made up of a maximum of 12 players, six of whom are on the court at a time. There are two local divisions in our Area: Traditional (the Warhawks) and Modified (the Nighthawks). Our teams have advanced to the Fall State Games in Virginia Beach and won Gold or Silver at each tournament. The sport is great fun and great exercise. If you are interested in more information, you can contact the Volleyball Coordinator.
Calling All Aviation Enthusiasts – Get a GRIP (on an airplane…)

A letter from the Area 26 Plane Pull Coach

To All -

On Saturday September 14, 2019, over 50,000 people will attend the Dulles Plane Pull. Our Athletes have the opportunity to participate in this event by being part of the Special Olympics Virginia Plane Pull Team. This team will pull first to demonstrate that our Athletes are strong, dedicated and determined to be the best they can in all they do.

Registration is open. We currently have two teams, The Aero Hands and Delapp’s Gang. The donation page is open at: https://impact.specialolympicsva.org/team/249170

Family and friends are welcome to attend this event and participate by cheering on the Plane Pull team. This event is free and open to everyone. You will see and talk with our area police departments, plane and car clubs and participate in other activities that are happening throughout the day. It is an amazing event for all ages. Go to PlanePull.com for more information.

Thank you and look forward to seeing everyone at 2019 Dulles Plane Pull event.
Introducing our new Columnist…

This month we have the privilege to highlight one of our own. Virginia Global Messenger, Area 26 expert bowler and multi-sport athlete Billy Duquette was selected as the Special Olympics Virginia Athlete of the Year. The honor is well deserved - He is a role model in every way.

Billy takes pride in his abilities while openly describing his challenges. He advocates for others and is an active mentor. In his capacity as Virginia Global Messenger, he has spoken to groups all over the State, raising awareness about Special Olympics and inclusiveness in athletics. In addition to his Messenger service, Billy also serves as the Athlete Representative on the SOVA Area 26 Council - the volunteer governing body for our Area. He participates as a voting member in setting policy and resolving issues with rules and competitions.

Billy has participated in six sports over his 16 years in the program but is known for (and most comfortable in…) bowling. An above average bowler scores between 150 and 170 out of the maximum 300 points and may (if lucky) brag a game over 200. Back on Mother’s Day in 2018, Billy finished with 299 - one pin in the last frame from a perfect game. According to the Professional Bowlers Association, the chances of a perfect game are between 5000 and 10000 to 1 against, so Mr. Duquette is in rare company on the lanes.

Besides being recognized by SOVA, Billy’s hometown of Herndon also honored him last month for (in the words on his certificate…) "admirably representing the Town of Herndon; dedicating your time and efforts to the health, community, sports and education pillars of Special Olympics Virginia; and being a true example of the Special Olympics spirit”.

With his high degree of participation and strong leadership, these accolades are understandable, but hardly the end of the story. Billy is charting another new course… this time as a writer - he will be joining the staff of this newsletter. Look for his new column “the Athlete’s Corner” in our next issue.

— by Barry Tilton, source material provided by Billy Duquette
Sports notes

This section will feature information on current activities provided by the current season coordinators. This issue, the notes are about the Fall. Next month, we will describe Winter Sports.

Bocce – Matt Wheeler, bocce@novasova.org
While less well known in the US, Bocce is a very fun game of skill, and is played all over Europe. Here locally, we play a Fall season, practicing in Burke Lake from August through the Fall State Games.

Bowling (Adult) – Barbara De Lisa, novasovabowl@gmail.com
Adult Bowling leagues play in both Fall and Spring, with the Fall season running from early September through the State Games. The sport has a cap of 140 bowlers, and is full for this term, but be on the lookout for the Spring signup.

Flag football – Elaine Tilton, fallwinterdirector@gmail.com
AVENGERS ASSEMBLE!! The brand-new Area 26 Avengers Flag Football team had its first practice on Saturday the 24th. The squad is full, and ready-to-rumble this Fall!! They play their first game in VA Beach in October. The season runs to mid November, including State Games

Golf – Mark Emery, novasovagolf@gmail.com
The Fall Golf season is underway. We practice and play from August to the November State Games. We also have a Spring practice season in May each year.

Soccer – Abigail Lacy, soccer@novasova.org
Soccer is underway in Area 26. We have a large number of teams from Middle School on up to the Adult league. We play tournament soccer, so all athletes need to be able to move around the field unassisted, but we do have many levels of skill, and there are usually a few teams that have room each year. We play our first tournament the 24th of September, and finish at State Games.

Volleyball – Elaine Tilton, fallwinterdirector@gmail.com
The Nighthawks and Warhawks practice sessions are now underway. Our first tournaments are in Shenandoah September 29th. Volleyball is full for this season, which runs from August to November’s State Games.

NOTE: The Area 26 website is currently under construction, but the links for the sports coordinators and registration are active. For more information, Contact the appropriate coordinator.

Website: http://novasova.org/

In the meantime, coach and volunteer resources can be found on the Special Olympics Virginia (SOVA) site at https://specialolympicsva.org/volunteer/volunteer-resources

Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt!