

Aurora Special Ducks bring home Provincial Gold



By Donna Schweitzer

The Aurora Special Ducks swim team had an impressive showing at the Special Olympics Spring Provincial Games, bringing home a hefty 8 gold medals.

Gary Freeman, Mary Harberer and Nathan Kim all took home wins from the Ontario Provincials held in Guelph, Ontario this past May.

The three swimmers from Aurora took home 11 medals total, 8 of which were first place finishes. Gold medals were awarded to Gary Freeman (freestyle 25m, 50m and 200m), Mary Harberer (freestyle 200m and 400m) and Nathan Kim (breast stroke 25m, 50m and butterfly 25m).

The swimmers' performances make them eligible for advancement to the Special Olympics Canada National Summer Games to be held in Halifax in 2018.

Special Olympics swim Coach Lloyd Brown was thrilled with the outcome, and praised the athletes for their dedication and sporting attitude.

"Each of the athletes had an upbeat, cooperative outlook. I was so pleased with the success of the team at provincials, and the self-confidence it gave the athletes, both in and out of the pool."

Gary Freeman, who has been swimming with the team for six years, enjoyed meeting new people in Guelph and getting the chance to reconnect with old friends and coaches. Gary said he is particularly proud that "at 49 years old he is swimming against people 20 and 35 years younger, and winning."

Julie Powell, Volunteer Coordinator for Special Olympics Aurora, cites the dedication of great coaches as a key contributor to the terrific performances at these events.

"We couldn't be more proud of our athletes, and the hard work our swimmers and coaches put into training for these events. As we have seen, their commitment has really paid off."

Held over three days, the Provincial Spring Games were the largest in Special Olympics Ontario history. Led by the Guelph Police Service, the games welcomed more than 1,000 athletes and coaches from across the province. Taking place every 4 years, the Provincial Games are made possible through the dedication of over 600 volunteers.

If you would like information on Special Olympic coaching opportunities please contact Julie at aurora.volunteer.coordinator@specialolympicsontario.ca.