



Lebanon Man Honored for Special Olympics Participation

A Lebanon man is one of twenty-four Special Olympics athletes from around the nation recognized with a local ESPY award, given by ESPN for excellence in sports performance.

Jeremy Colter, 30, has been involved with the Special Olympics for decades, competing in and officiating basketball games through the organization. He was honored to receive the award.

"This proves that doing so much work over a lifetime and putting your heart and soul into what you care about comes back, and it actually shows that people care about what you do," Colter said. "It represent everything that I have always been striving for."

Mary Conroy, president of Special Olympics New Hampshire, was not surprised that Colter stood out among athletes around the nation.

"Jeremy exemplifies the characteristics that make an athlete great: determination, sportsmanship and a true love of the game," she said.

Colter said that the connection with other people is one reason he loves basketball.

"The sport of basketball is another form of working as a team and building friends and making a team effort," he said.

Colter has cerebral palsy, which affects his motor skills and speech. He first became involved with the Special Olympics when he was 5 years old and could not walk or talk. However, he instantly found community, he said.

"They were the first people that we came in touch with," he said. "(The Special Olympics are) a great place that accepts everybody. It doesn't matter your race, who you are or where you live or whatever the case may be, they would accept you for you." Colter moved from participating in basketball games to officiating games throughout New Hampshire and beyond. Conroy said his trajectory is an example for other athletes. "Jeremy's courage and determination are an inspiration," she said. "Like so many other Special Olympics athletes, he does not let stereotypes or doubt stand in the way of reaching his goals."

Colter graduated from Lebanon High School in 2005 and works as an assistant manager at a gas station in Lebanon. He lives with his parents, Sandy and Blake Colter. Colter's father said that receiving this award was recognition of the hard work his son has put in.

"He's really worked hard through his life just to make himself part of the community," Blake Colter said. "This solidifies work he has put in and how he has made himself what he is today. It's a reminder of how far he's come."

No matter how far he has come, playing basketball and connecting with other Special Olympics athletes remains a passion of Colter.

"I could talk for an hour about what the Special Olympics means to me, that other people should have the same opportunities that I've had in my life," he said. "I could go on and on."

— **Kelly Burch**

Colter

