

Selma Times-Journal

Special athletes

By [George L. Jones \(Contact\)](#) | Selma Times-Journal

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The Leverett brothers drove from all over Alabama to watch their younger brother, Myron, compete in the Special Olympics at Memorial Stadium on Wednesday.

The three men cheered, clapped and offered words of encouragement after all the other runners had set foot off the track surrounding the football field. But the woman they were congratulating didn't even win her race.

It's that sense of community that has lasted since the event began in Selma 30 years ago.

"It's inspirational, really, to see him compete and have fun," said Eugene Leverett, who lives in Mobile. "It's good to know he has a newfound family to keep him happy when we're not here."

Staff, family members and volunteers met with equal enthusiasm victorious athletes, those who didn't win and those who needed a helping hand to get off the ground.

The Cahaba Center for Mental Health and Retardation, which sponsors the event, gives athletes a chance to gain valuable life experiences, said Gwen Jones.

Jones began with Cahaba Center 33 years ago as a teacher's aide and is now a coach and director of the Day Program. She can't help but look upon some of the athletes as if they were her own children.

"When they accomplish it, there's so many smiles and joy," Jones said. "It's been the joy of their lives doing something they've never done before."

It's safe to say Tonya Pitts is a perennial contender for first place in every event. Minutes after dominating the competition in the opening rounds of the softball toss, she began thinking about the next events.

"I like it because there's nobody that can throw against me and run against me," Pitts said. "I love to come out here and have a good time."

Cahaba Center Executive Director Lafon Barlow praised the organizers, volunteers and fans for supporting the event for so long, especially the youth. The event has not just survived in her 22 years with the organization. It has grown.

"When I first came to Cahaba Center, I had no idea how big Special Olympics was. Every year, it has gotten even bigger," Barlow said.

Carthone Rudolph, who has competed in the games all 30 years, and Mayor George Evans finished the opening parade by running with the Olympic torch.

After attending the games for the first time, eldest brother Donald Leverett left with a sense of pride and a newfound respect for his brother.

"I didn't realize he could do it," Donald said. "He always talks about beating me in basketball. Now I wonder whether he can."

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Telemedicine Connects Patients To Care

By [Chad Petri](#) Reporter

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Chad Petri

16-year-old Amanda Parnell is being treated for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder from an AltaPointe facility in Washington County. Registered nurse practitioner Dolores Bray is helping her computer in Mobile. She says the telemedicine system helps eliminate distractions.

"Because you don't have any interruptions, you're focused more on the person that you're looking at you have more time to spend with them," says Bray. Workers here say their caseloads remain relatively the same, while they are able to see more patients. The technology also allows them to see patients in crisis quickly.

"So if someone comes in who's suicidal or homicidal we have the ability right then to hook up with a doctor in one of our other locations to be able to treat that patient so they can live a better life," says AltaPointe CEO Tuerk Schlesinger. He says the system allows doctors to serve more people in rural areas of mobile and Washington Counties. He says it's care they wouldn't ordinarily get. Doctors spend less time commuting and more time helping patients.

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