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**News release / diary item**

**Special Olympic ski competition comes to Norfolk**

Medal winners from the Special Olympics World Winter Games held recently in Austria are due to line up at a ski competition in Norfolk this Sunday (23rd April).

They are among more than 40 national and local skiers taking part in the contest at the Norfolk Snowsports Club at Trowse.

The Special Olympics movement is for athletes with learning disabilities and covers both summer and winter sports. The 21-strong GB team brought back 8 gold, 5 silver and 5 bronze medals from Austria last month in winter Olympic sports involving athletes from 105 countries.

“Having medal winners from the World Winter Games competing will spur all of the skiers on. The competition is going to be fierce on the slope,” said event organiser John Burroughs.

The eastern regional competition, which is being held at Trowse for the second time following a successful debut in 2016, will be opened by ITV Anglia presenter Becky Jago. She said: “Both my parents were special needs teachers, so I grew up knowing how important it is for everyone to feel equal and valued, and to work towards goals - and hopefully do a bit of showing off when those goals are reached. I'm really looking forward to seeing some fantastic skiing - maybe I'll be inspired to hit the slopes myself in the future!”

Nicola Fish, chair of Special Olympics Norfolk, said: “We are continuing to grow the sports on offer in Norfolk and want to help more athletes represent their county and hopefully their country. This summer we will be taking 28 athletes to the National Summer Games in Sheffield and to be able to hold a second winter games competition here is fantastic for our athletes.”

Twelve skiers will be representing Norfolk and the eastern region. They include George Burroughs from Lowestoft who won three gold medals at the French National Games last year and narrowly missed out on a place in the GB team for the 2017 World Winter Games.

The competition will feature slalom and grand slalom races with the fastest skiers awarded medals, although all skiers will receive competition certificates for taking part.

Timings for the day are:

10.00 - 11.00 Arrival and practice runs

11.00 - 12.00 Classification runs

12.00 - 12.30 Lunch

12.45 Opening ceremony

        Races

3.00 - 3.30 Medal presentation and close

**For more information please contact:** Event organiser John Burroughs 01502 731250 / 07766 757841, Special Olympics Norfolk chair Nicola Fish 07948 353245 or press contact Tom Walshe 01953 789510 / 07799 048405

**Notes:**

Special Olympics Norfolk is a county branch of Special Olympics Great Britain. It was originally formed around 15 years ago, and relaunched in 2013. It is one of 6 branches in the Eastern Region, along with East Herts, Essex, Peterborough, Suffolk and St Albans.

 Special Olympics Norfolk currently supports around 70 registered athletes with about 120 training regularly and the numbers are growing. It offers 7 sports: Alpine skiing, athletics, artistic gymnastics, boccia, cricket, football and swimming.