Moorestown Wins NJSIAA Unified Basketball Championship

On March 18, the Moorestown Quakers faced off against the Union City Soaring Eagles in the first ever NJSIAA Unified Basketball Championship at the CURE Insurance Arena.

For the past 28 years, NJSIAA has hosted an annual Tournament of Champions for high school basketball, and a recent joint partnership between NJSIAA and Special Olympics New Jersey has allowed athletes with and without disabilities to compete together in interscholastic Unified competition.

The Moorestown Unified team edged out a 25-21 win over Union City on Sunday – making them the first Unified State Basketball Champions.

"[The game] was a lot of fun," said Thomas Grable, Moorestown sophomore. "I made the buzzer-beater. It means a lot to me. I’ve made good friends. I love playing with my friends, helping them out."

The Moorestown Unified team will also be representing Team New Jersey in the 2018 Special Olympics USA Games this July in Seattle.

"My brother is autistic so I’ve been around the Special Olympics community my entire life,” said Unified partner and Moorestown senior Grace Riccioti-Molishus. “Being a part of the Unified basketball team is the most incredible experience I’ve had in my life.”

Congrats to both teams for being a part of this historic event and showing what the phrase “Play Unified. Live Unified.” truly means. Click Here to see more photos.
Woodrow Wilson held its Annual Unified Basketball Game against the Paramus Spartans. Although Woodrow lost to the Spartans, a good time was had by all. The stands were filled with fans, the Woodrow Wilson Pep band played throughout the game to motivate the players. The Woodrow Wilson Unified dance team performed during opening ceremonies to rev up the crowd. This was a memorable afternoon for all involved.

Pond Road Middle School

This month Pond Road Middle School discussed Autism Awareness Month in April. They asked students what they already knew and one student with Asperger’s spoke beautifully about her experiences and some of the attributes that people along the spectrum may have. The students read short children’s books that explained a bit more. After, they discussed how they could make a difference in their school and wrote their goals on a puzzle pieces.

Burnet Middle School

Burnet Middle School spent most of March planning for its first Unified Cup Bowling Tournament. They had practices every Monday. They had club meetings to help start preparing to film their video for their Respect Week assembly. They also finalized their Respect Week plan and created week long events and activities. Burnet is starting to plan for its track season. Changing practices to Wednesdays so they can practice at the high school track. Students are working on filming their video, as well as took a little time out to celebrate St. Patrick’s Day. They baked treats and cooked corned beef and cabbage. Their Unified club is looking to turnkey its program onto their younger students since their amazing 8th graders will be leaving this year. They feel their message needs to be strong during Respect Week to help keep students involved. Their Unified sports program did great taking bronze at the Unified Cup tournament. Things will get crazy at Burnet with testing, but they are all signed up for Rutgers and look forward to training this spring with track.
Montgomery Township High School

Montgomery Township High School Bake Sale and Choose to Include Day
This month Unified Club continued to meet every Tuesday after school from 3-4 pm. Students meet throughout four schools in the Lyndhurst Public School District. Each school has developed a solid group of students from third through eighth grade. Students participate in activities to promote team building and leadership skills. Unified Club has established an excellent group of leaders who now take charge in promoting the club.

It is wonderful to see friendships grow as Unified Club continues this school year. Every Tuesday students look forward to attending Unified Club.

Throughout March, students practiced 4 Hoops as well as sharks and alleys, titanic, rainbow tag, kickball, steal the bacon, side line soccer, and relay races. Currently, they are in the process of planning two 4 Hoop tournament days that will be held Tuesday afternoon in April. Students will meet from the four schools at a field in Lyndhurst to verse each schools Unified Club team in 4 Hoops. Students have been practicing this month and training for the competition. Unified Club is also planning for the Week of Respect and Lyndhurst Unified Club Olympics. They are looking forward to the exciting events Unified Club will be hosting this spring.
School Highlights
March 2018

Unified Cup Bowling

The Special Olympics New Jersey Unified Cup Bowling Tournament was held on Sunday, March 18. Athletes in the tournament competed in pairs, one athlete and one unified partner. By the end of the day, 130 bowlers from 18 different middle and high schools competed. Those numbers wound up being the largest numbers since the bowling tournament started 4 years ago. Click Here for more photos.

Somerville High School

On March 11, the Somerville High School (SHS) Unified Bowling Team marched behind the SHS Marching Band along with the SHS Cheerleaders, the Champion SHS Girls Basketball Team and the Champion SHS Football Team in the St. Patrick’s Day Parade in Somerville, NJ. It was a great day for a parade and it was an honor to march in the community.

Later in the month, the team won the 2018 Unified Cup D5 Championship.
VOORHEES HIGH SCHOOL

During March, the Voorhees High School Unified Club hosted many awareness booths outside the cafeteria. These booths included:

- 3/26/2018 - Epilepsy Awareness Purple Day – The whole school was encouraged to wear purple. The booth was decorated in purple, had a candy give away, and information on epilepsy.
- 3/12-3/16 - Week of Respect – The booth had photo booth with props, candy guess, awareness stickers, etc.

Unified Sports played basketball games on March 13th; 4:00 pm Del Val – HOME and March 20th; 4:00 pm Del Val - AWAY. The team prepared for the 2018 Unified Cup School Basketball Championship on April 8.
TRENTON SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Unified high school basketball team won the Moorestown tournament defeating Moorestown High School and Union City High School. Congratulations to the players and coaches from Daylight/Twilight, TCHS Communications and TCHS Hanover. Congratulations team!

JEFFERSON TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL

Jefferson Township High School used the month of March to start introducing some events to the students and simple rules they need to follow when running with a baton and long jumping. The weather did not help with getting outside, so all their practices were held inside where they ran in the hallways (the students love doing this since they can’t run in the hallways during the school day). March was also the time they started thinking about partners for their season and which students would be good matches for their athletes.

Details of the Jefferson Township High School March agenda included the following. They introduced events: 4x100, 4x200, shot put (video), javelin (video), long jump (video). Warm ups. Activities: passing baton, long jump, relay races and throwing the ball. Then they practiced in groups by seeing how fast they can pass the baton – first person to last person, jumping the line until they touched the person in front of them, and throwing the ball to the person in front of them without dropping it.
Sayreville War Memorial High School

Wednesday the 28th was the culminating event for Unified basketball. It was another tremendous success. One point of emphasis with basketball this season for Sayreville War Memorial High School was to make the game more competitive. Over the past few seasons the competitions have turned into the gen ed kids not really playing, rather they were just facilitating for the other students. The coaches were told this season that it should be a real game and there should only be slight modifying for certain students. The kids did a great job this season and everyone had a really good time!

On another fun note, Sayreville War Memorial High School is on their second set of Unified sports players of the month. They are in the showcase with all the other teams in the school!
School Highlights
March 2018

North Hunterdon High School

As you can see this month was SUPER busy for the North Hunterdon High School Unified Bowling and Basketball teams! The kids were involved in various activities and had SO much fun! They competed in their first Unified Bowling Tournament and even extended their year a few games once they found some new teams to play.

The Basketball team did not walk away with any wins but they had tons of smiles! They expanded this program as well by playing two other teams that were not involved last year.

University Elementary School

This month at play Unified, University Elementary School had races that focused on listening. It is an elimination game that is from Spark. Since they are doing basketball during PE during class, the participants were showed how to play the game of “Knockout.” The students were encouraged to cheer on teammates who were still competing in the game. The 5th graders shot on the regulation sized hoops and the small portable hoops were used by the 4th graders. This encouraged concentration and promoted gamesmanship.

Ridge High School

The Unified program was very busy in March. Ridge High School was getting ready for their game vs. Millburn, as well as hosting the Unified Basketball Tournament at Ridge. All parents, staff, and school were on board to ensure that they had a great tournament.

Their Unified Club assisted in making signs for concessions and to motivate team. The Unified club also met to create a trail mix of choice together as a group.

March was also used as preparation for their showing in the Unified Cup Tournament.
Steinert High School East

This month was filled with a quite a few snow days so Steinert High School East tried their best to fit in a lot of different activities. They continued to practice for the Unified Basketball Tournament in April. They also made new friends throughout their Unified Club. This experience for the students has been very rewarding. Seeing them have things in common with other student at Steinert is very exciting for everyone involved.

Cinnaminson High School

Activities at Cinnaminson High School were a mix of Club meetings and Basketball practices. On March 7, they had a Unify Club planning meeting to come up with themes for Club activities. The themes they decided on were St. Patrick’s Day (Shamrock Rice Krispie treats, Irish potatoes, pin the Shamrock on the Leprechaun) and Easter (dyed eggs, Easter egg hunt, Jelly Bean tasting activity). At Basketball practice they worked on defense skills and where to stand in a zone, dribbling to the basket, using the backboard, a warm up routine for Play Unified Cup and went over “plays.”
Thomas Crable hit a basket at the buzzer to cap Moorestown’s 25-21 win over Union City in the NJSIAA Unified Basketball championship game at Mercer County Arena.

TRENTON — Thomas Crable knew exactly what to do.

The Moorestown sophomore guard squared up to the hoop and let it fly. The horn echoed through the Mercer County Arena as his baseline jumper swished through the net. Crable and the Quakers were state champions.

Crable’s basket put a capper on a 25-21 win over Union City in the 2018 NJSIAA Unified Sports basketball championship. He scored six points in the win.

“It was a lot of fun,” Crable said. “I made the buzzer-beater. It means a lot to me. I’ve made good friends. I love playing with my friends, helping them out.”

The NJSIAA and the Special Olympics have partnered on a joint program bringing athletes with or without disabilities to compete together in interscholastic competition.

Unified athletes, who are disabled, compete alongside Unified partners, who are not, on an equal basis. Sunday’s championship was every bit as competitive as the Tournament of Champions finals that closed out the championship triple-header.

“They are called Unified athletes and partners,” head coach Mikal Lundy said. “We just call them players. When we got together in December for the first time, the goal was to become a real team, a family.”

In the process they also became champions.

“This was incredible,” Quakers partner Grace Riccioti-Molishus said. “My brother is autistic so I’ve been around the Special Olympics community my entire life. Being a part of the Unified basketball team is the most incredible experience I’ve had in my life.”

Riccioti-Molishus is a softball player. Varsity athletes can’t compete as Unified partners in their own sport, but are more than welcome in other sports.

With competitions in bowling, soccer, track and field, basketball and new sports added each year, there is plenty of opportunity to be a part of the fun.

For a jayvee basketball player like Colin Ginley, that might mean slipping away from one practice to work out with his other team. For Riccioti-Molishus, it means the world.

“I wouldn’t give this up for anything,” Riccioti-Molishus said. “This sport means more to me than playing four years of softball. This sport is more of a family for me.

“It’s what a family should be. We bicker sometimes. We compete. We’re like siblings in that way. We’re always yelling, screaming and encouraging each other to be better, to do better.”

It would be hard to do better than a state championship but the Quakers will give it a try.

Sophomore Joel Pederson led the Quakers with 11 points. Senior center Raymond Brady (2 points), junior forward Robert Fletcher and senior forward Mac Banquier rotated through the lineup as strong rebounders. Senior forward Michael Grant and Marcus Harvey helped start the transition offense.

Senior guard Megan Vazquez and sophomore guard Ricardo Texiera brought an unmatched energy to the floor.

“This was amazing, thrilling, awesome,” Texiera said. “I got the assist on Thomas’ game-winning shot.

“This shows that we are a really good team. We trusted each other. We believed in each other. We had determination on our side.”

That and a pretty spectacular trophy destined for a spot of honor in the Quakers athletics showcases. Moorestown principal Andrew Seibel, who shares assistant coaching duties with Brittany Shields, is sure to find the right spot for the trophy.

Lundy, a pretty fair high school athlete in his days at Florence, has played in and won state championship games. Nothing quite compares to hoisting a trophy with this group of players.

“This is even more special,” Lundy said. “To see these kids. The ones that don’t get to participate in sports like their peers, is just a great experience. It’s amazing to have that joy of working hard for something and winning, for all of them. I wish everybody could have seen them when we got to the locker room. It was pure joy and elation.”
Arthur L. Johnson HS Unified Sports Basketball Team Defeats North Hunterdon

CLARK, NJ - The Arthur L. Johnson High School Unified Sports Basketball team defeated the Lions of North Hunterdon by a score of 66-60 recently.

The exciting game featured highlights from both teams. For the Crusaders, Pawel “Thunderstruck” Baniukiewicz scored 22 points with 2 assists and grabbed 5 rebounds. Dom “Battleship” Vito scored 20 points with 1 assist and 6 rebounds. Taher “Superman” Lokhandwala scored 12 points and 3 rebounds while Kevin “Torpedo” Dews scored 12 points and 1 assist.

Unified Sports is sponsored by Special Olympics. According to the Special Olympics, the organization “aims to build a society of acceptance and inclusion for people with disabilities and, by extension, for everyone. We know that sports training and competition can help achieve that goal.”

“This is one of the most exciting programs I have been a part of. I am very thankful to the coaches, Ms. DiIorio and Mrs. Rosenmeier, the ALJ PTA for their generous donation, Mr. Kalikas for his support, and to all of the students who have shown such amazing teamwork and sportsmanship. I could not be more proud to be a part of this high school program,” said Doreen Babis, Director of Student Support Services.

Also cited in SUBURBAN NEWS:
Woodrow Wilson School

March was one of the busiest months at Woodrow Wilson School (WW) in New Brunswick for Play Unified. From hosting their first annual Free Book Fair to their weekly Leadership Meetings to their Respect Week. They also hosted their yearly Spring Play Unified District meeting along with the New Brunswick High School (NBHS).

During the district meeting they had different team building activities and presented WW’s Disability Awareness Fair and the NBHS Respect Ceremony.

Respect Week started with the Play Unified Advisors going into the 2-6 grade classrooms to read a book by Trudy Ludwig named “Trouble Talk.” After reading the book, they had a discussion about it and discussed different ways to deal with situations where trouble talk can happen in/out of school. Next they hosted the Respect Ceremony which was presented by the New Brunswick High School Play Unified Leadership Council surrounding the topic of “Kindness is my Superpower.” Then they hosted a Respect Your Future event with only the 8th graders who are attending the high school and had a panel with the high school administrators, teachers and students. Finally, they finished with a Unified Game Day with their Play Unified Club and Leadership Council.
March was an exciting month for Unified Sports at Mendham. They saw real progress amongst their team, and were able to really expose their school community as a whole to the message of Unified Sports. Over the past month, their team has dedicated themselves each week to learning the rules of basketball and developing their skills as players. As a result of their hard work, they were able to hold their first inter-team scrimmage to showcase their new teamwork and cooperation.

While technically their scrimmage took place on the first of April, they have decided to detail it in this month’s report, as the student’s hard work throughout March led to a truly special opportunity. The snow they encountered through the year led to their school district needing to make up days during spring break. As a result, they had a few smaller practices during March. This did not stop Unified, however! Despite many students being absent because of prior trips and plans, Unified Sports still practiced with dedicated fervor in order to prepare for their upcoming scrimmage. Their team worked hard to be ready to compete during the first practice of April.

On the day of their scrimmage, their practice was spectated by teachers, friends, administrators, and various others who wanted to see the fruits of their labor. It was a truly special day for all members of the Unified Sports community at Mendham High School. It was the first time that school community members were able to see the effects that working together as a team has on the students involved. While their players were excited to showcase all that they learned, the value of friendships and camaraderie were the real elements on display. A few teachers were moved to tears as members of both teams displayed competitiveness, respect, and sportsmanship. As each team cheered one another on, it was clear that the magic of Unified was on display.

West Morris Mendham High School is excited for the opportunities that a new season and a new year will bring. Unified Sports has certainly made its mark at Mendham in its first year. It is clear that the future is bright for this incredibly special team.
School Highlights
March 2018

Randolph High School

Randolph was busy in March. They focused on social activities (Spring Fling) as well as Unified athletics.

Chatham-ECLC

During March, Chatham-ECLC held their Week of Respect as a collaborative effort between the two schools. They coordinated events during each day of the week. The highlight was on Tuesday, March 6th when 40 students from Chatham HS walked to ECLC to partner with 40 members of the Play Unified Club. Each set of partners followed the ECLC student’s schedule for the day and they attended class together. They concluded the day with a big Unified lunch and made posters together. It was an amazing day!

They also held bowling and basketball practices in preparation for the Unified Cup tournaments. They brought three teams to the Unified Bowling tournament and their top division team won the silver medal! They also were honored to have one member from each of their schools read the Opening Ceremony script.

Chatham-ECLC looks forward to the basketball tournament next month and for their Teens Connect nights to start up!
**CLAYTON HIGH SCHOOL**

The month of March was one of planning for the “Spring into the Unified Movement” event. The Unified classes invited the parent, students and staff to a night filled with games and crafts.

**FRANK J. SMITH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

This March at Frank J. Smith, their #BeAPal Unified gym class met and did activities that focused on teamwork and encouragement. Students did a great job working with their buddies and using encouraging words, which they learned are just as important as the physical component in sports. The Pals also ordered t-shirts that they can't wait to show off! At the end of every class, the Pals form a huddle and close the session out with their signature group handshake! It makes the team feel unified. They are hoping for warmer weather as they anticipate their upcoming Unified gym classes and their Unified Game Day in June!

**KAWAMEEH MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Kawameeh Middle School has mini Golf scheduled for May 31, so they have been working on golf skills with peers in Physical Education. They also began working on track and field.

Club members have met and helped with preparing for Spirit Week. They continued meeting daily as a club.

Kawameeh wants to expand to include intramurals for 2018/2019 school year.

**OVERBROOK HIGH SCHOOL**

During March, Overbrook High School had a meeting and picture day. They practiced bowling, and participated in the school pep rally.
**DELAWARE VALLEY REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL**

March events for Delaware Valley Regional High School are pictured below: Unified Drumline at their home Unified Basketball Game, Unified Basketball Game, DelVal Buddies Bowling and DelVal Unified Tournament.

**UNION CITY HIGH SCHOOL**

March was very active for the Union City High School Unified sports teams. They had all of four of their teams (basketball, bowling, soccer and track) training at the same time! The Unified Bowling team was training for the Unified Cup at Bowlero. They sent three Unified teams to the tournament and they all had an awesome time. They thought it was also great to see their friends from the other teams.

Union City High School has two Unified Basketball teams and they both were training twice a week in preparation for their tournaments. At first they played friendly games at Paramus and Ridge Schools. One of their teams competed in the NJSIAA championship held at the Cure Insurance Arena in Trenton and the other team competed at the Unified Cup at Princeton. They finished in second place at NJSIAA. They brought a fan bus to the bowling tournament and afterwards, they traveled to support the basketball team.

Their Unified Soccer team trains year-round. They are training indoors on Saturday before basketball practice. Their Unified Track team is getting started. They also have a team entered into the Penn Relays. Last year it was a great experience.

The Club meetings in March were focused on getting fans together for all of the competitions. They also prepared for Autism Awareness Activities.
On the Court

The Unified Basketball Team practiced at Daylight/Twilight High School on Wednesday’s afterschool.

The team consisted of students from Daylight/Twilight, TCCHS (Chambers), and TCCHS (Hanover).

The team traveled to Moorestown High School and played against Moorestown High School and Union City High School.

Coaches Corner

Coach Norman Francis and Coach Keith Wallace did an amazing job teaching the players how to dribble, pass, and shoot.

They also focused on team defense (2-3 zone) and offensive strategies.

Grant Elementary

Susanne Stahlbrand and Tamika Cabell, Trenton Elementary School Teachers, have been heading the Elementary Unified program for the second straight year.

The word is out that this program is the place to be!

This is evident as the enrollment has increased and the program gives the students a sense of belonging as well as something to look forward to.

The teachers are excited to expand this program to PJ Hill Elementary starting on Thursday, April 19th.

The program was held afterschool on Thursdays and was held from February 1st – March 22nd.

The students participated in a variety of activities. They were engaged in arts and crafts, movement based activities, and traditional games.

The students enjoyed receiving certificates and medals on the final day of the program.

Rivera Middle School

Tracey Davis and Nicole Carmichael have taken the Unified program at Rivera Middle School to another level.

They established a partnership with the Boys & Girls club on Tuesdays – Thursdays from 4:15 – 6:00.

The program even includes transportation home!

Activities Galore

The partnership with the Boys & Girls Club has given many new experiences for the students.

They have participated in karate, step dancing, and sowing in addition to traditional sports.

They have been engaged in karate, step dancing, sowing, as well as

Trenton Unified in the Community

The Unified program will expand into the community at the West Ward starting on Saturday, April 21st.
BERKELEY TOWNSHIP (BERKELEY TOWNSHIP ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CLARA B. WORTH SCHOOL, BAYVILLE SCHOOL, AND H&M POTTER)

Berkeley Township Elementary School finished their second round of clubs at the end of March and it was extremely successful. Group collaboration, mentoring, and games were the themes and they had a great time.

Their last club session will be Outdoor Discovery in May!

H&M Potter has completed two rounds of clubs, Clara B. Worth completed a great session of clubs in January and February, and Bayville will be starting their inaugural sessions in April through May. The lower elementary schools have focused on a variety of different skills and the unified themes can be seen throughout the hallways!

Following are some photos from H&M Potter! Trust falls and empathy training!! Play Unified!
Millburn High School

Millburn High School (MHS) has been quite active. They had five teams participate in a basketball tournament (Union City, Chatthan/Eclic, Ridge, Clark and MHS). All teams played two games and had a blast. Their team was invited to play in a special fundraiser for their senior class. Additionally, they were featured on CBS NY News!!! (Click here for broadcast). It has been an exciting month for MHS. Additionally, they are starting their middle school team with practices at the end of this month!

Click below for some articles about Millburn High School team done by their students:
http://studio462.org/play-unified-basketball-tournament/
https://www.mypaperonline.com/category/millburn-news