



For more information contact:
Frank Shuftan
CPS Office of Communications
Telephone: 773.553.1620
Telefax: 773.553.1621
Website: www.cps.k12.il.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

June 5, 2008

CPS Teacher Named National Special Olympics Coach of the Year

'He Embodies the Best Qualities of Good Coaching'

The usual year-end awards assembly at Burnside Scholastic Academy today featured a very special and unusual honor: one of the school's teachers, Elmer Mestrovic, was named 2008 Special Olympics North America Coach of the Year.

Mestrovic a 30-year Special Olympics coach, was presented with a plaque by Dan Conley, Special Olympics Illinois, representing Special Olympics North America, which oversees Special Olympics programs in the U.S., Canada and the Caribbean.

Mestrovic, a Bridgeport resident, has been a leader among Special Olympics coaches in Chicago, serving on the committee that launched a successful initiative to increase Special Olympics programs in the Chicago Public Schools. More than 90 schools now participate. He currently coaches more than 60 Special Olympics athletes at Burnside Academy in a variety of sports.

"He embodies the best qualities of good coaching," Sheila O'Callaghan, Special Olympics program administrator for the Chicago Public Schools, said about Mestrovic in one of the nominating letters to the selection committee. "His athletes know that he expects them to do their best and he will honor their efforts, no matter what the result. His athletes have learned the lessons of respect and teamwork well, and always help each other when they falter. He strongly believes in his role and uses each opportunity to teach his athletes, all athletes and other coaches the right way to inspire their athletes."

Mestrovic in the past has been honored as Chicago Special Olympics Coach of the Year.

"Elmer's athletes are the kind that will stop mid-race to aid a fallen runner, then turn around and keep going on the track. He and his colleagues at Burnside have built a great community for the students," O'Callaghan said.

The Chicago Public Schools is the nation's third-largest school system. It includes more than 600 schools and serves about 409,000 students.