

ASA Umpire Garrett Tharp works Virginia Special Olympics Tournament



From the moment Garrett Tharp got off the airplane in Virginia, he knew he was about to embark on something special. You see, Garrett was a long way from home, traveling with his mother and about to umpire in a Nationally recognized softball tournament for Special Olympic athletes. Yet Garrett was just a little different from most folks, he was going to do it from a wheelchair.

Garrett, a young man from Ceres, California is a sports lover. "This is one way he can stay involved" said his mother Patty Tharp, "he really loves to umpire." From May 18 to May 22 Garrett did just that. He worked seven games during this four day event held in Bedford, Virginia. "It was really fun, and If I could go back again, I would love to".

One of the highlights of the tournament was during opening ceremonies. The Green Berets parachuted in to the ball park and there was a dance held for all the athletes, umpires and officials of the tournament. Garrett also attended the National D-Day Memorial and the Art Museum.

The Greater San Joaquin Softball Association sends umpires all over the nation by trading umpire slots to different tournaments. Commissioner Matt Pfeifer and Virginia Commissioner Andy Dooley got together at a National Commissioners Conference and spoke about the special Olympics slots. Mr. Dooley was excited about the possibility of Garrett coming to Virginia. After some negotiations and some financial help, the dream became a reality.

Greater San Joaquin was able to help by purchasing Garrett's plane ticket. "We try to help all our umpires who travel to work assigned tournaments, however this one was especially a no-brainer. Helping Garrett was definitely our pleasure", said Matt Pfeifer. So Garrett had a great time and wants to go back again. Well, if he keeps working hard, just maybe, that dream can also come true.

