

# Plane pullers benefit Special Olympics Iowa

Teams worked together to pull an airplane to raise money for Special Olympics Iowa.

Linh Ta, [lta@dmreg.com](mailto:lta@dmreg.com) 11:42 p.m. CDT June 7, 2014



(Photo: Linh Ta/The Register)

Hundreds of Iowans mustered all their might Saturday to raise money for Special Olympics Iowa by competing in a plane pulling competition at the Des Moines airport.

The plane weighs 122,000 pounds, but that didn't stop 36 teams of 20 people from pulling the Boeing 757 over 12 feet as quickly as possible. Many teams traversed the distance in seven to nine seconds.

The event generated over \$90,000 for athletes in Special Olympics Iowa.

Coordinator Steve Palmer, a retired police officer, also works on the Iowa Law Enforcement Torch Run, a local organization that supports the Special Olympics.

"All the police officers that get involved do this so they can compete," Palmer said. "So they can be as equal as other athletes around."

One of the pullers, Dave Mathis, 38, of Altoona, didn't learn how to walk until he was 7 years old. Born with Noonan syndrome, Mathis stays fit by meeting with a personal trainer, Joe Hogan of Anytime Fitness.

At first, Mathis just wanted to increase his upper body strength. But after working with Hogan, he ran his first 5K a few months ago, and on Saturday, Mathis was nose to nose with the Boeing and pulling with all his might.

"It was very awesome," Mathis said. "It was kind of heavy, but you know, it's neat to pull it back, and being a part of a team, people accepted me and made me a part of the team."

One group, "The Natural Born Pullers," donned Minion outfits from the film "Despicable Me" and beat the other teams by raising \$7,344. And they didn't even mind getting drenched while pulling the plane in the rain.

"Rain or shine, we're pulling a plane," said team captain Teresa McConnell, 47, of Urbandale.

The overall winner was the Story County Pullers with a time of 6.61 seconds.

This was the first plane pull to support Special Olympics Iowa, but Palmer said it wouldn't be the last. "They not only pulled an airplane, they pulled an airplane in a downpour," Palmer said.

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