

## Meet Salmon Arm's Special Olympians – 2025!



Back row, Left to Right:

Asst. Coach - Cinda M., Lauren P., Adam S., Asst. Coach - Ray E., Head Coach - Ernie N.

Front row, Left to Right:

Nick A., Kathleen N., Carina C.

Unless you've been into the club on Tuesday afternoons to see them practicing, you might not even know this bright, good-looking crew was even here. But, yes indeed, they've been here for 6 years, since February 2019! At that time, Head Coach Ernie took his athletes to the ice and began with the basics. He and his coaches have continued teaching and adding the finer points of the game.

Nick, Kathleen and Carina were all members of the original group back in 2019. Adam joined in 2022 and Lauren in 2023.

Competition for these athletes is tough to come by, but they have travelled to find it. Adam was invited and played with a Kamloops team in the 2023 Special Olympics BC Provincial Winter Games where the team won bronze in their division. Then in February 2024 the whole team

represented Salmon Arm in the Special Olympics Vernon Invitational Bonspiel. And they have plans to represent Salmon Arm in 2 competitions coming up this year. The team will compete at the Special Olympics Kelowna Invitational Bonspiel on January 25 and returning to the Special Olympics Vernon Invitational Bonspiel on March 2. (Who else in the club gets that many invitations?!)

As Ernie says, "The athletes especially enjoy competition against their parents / caregivers. They like winning just as much as anyone else...they know that there is always a next year if they lose." And a former SO coach in Salmon Arm once told me, "They share in the joy of the victors regardless of who they may be."

Why do Ernie and the coaches work with these athletes? "To be able to continue giving them the feeling that they can participate in the sport the same as all other athletes. And, hopefully, increase the athletes' curling skills and confidence in the game."

Thank you, coaches. And thank you, athletes. We're proud to have this fine group representing Salmon Arm and the SACC!