Special efforts
Davie student a top volunteer with Special Olympics

By Scott Fishman
STAFF WRITER

Garrett Robinson, a senior at University School in Davie, has been able to combine his love of volunteering with community service through his work with Special Olympics Broward County.

The Pembroke Pines resident’s first assignment was working with athletes for the volunteer during one of their meets.

Since then, he has gotten more involved, using the athletic background and giving them pointers on how to improve their skills. Robinson, 18, is touched by the athletes’ enthusiasm to learn and improve.

"Volunteering for the Special Olympics is an irreplaceable experience," he said. "Every week I volunteer, I learn something about the athletes and, honestly, even more about myself. It gives me a great opportunity to grow as a leader."

As chairman for the junior board of the Ropes Foundation, a nonprofit organization that gives money to charities, he was able to secure funds for the Special Olympics. In all, Robinson helped raise more than $3,500 for their programs. Earlier this year, he was presented with the Youth Volunteer of the Year award for his efforts.

"I was extremely honored in winning the award," he said. "When you look back on all the time you’ve spent with the athletes and the progress they’ve all made, it really hits you. You know that you really made a difference."

Linda Milib, director of Special Olympics Broward County, said Robinson is a great example for those looking to get involved.

"I know all the kids love him," she said. "The coaches and the parents love him. He’s the kind of volunteer we hope to keep involved in our program over the years, so they can take over for some of us in the future."

Robinson got a few of his friends and teammates on the University School tennis team to help out. He volunteers Saturday mornings during practice and meets. They volunteer in a variety of ways, whether it’s cooking or just motivating the athletes.

"I’m looking forward to continuing working with all the athletes and watching their progress in practice and in meets," Robinson said. "I hope to continue working with the Special Olympics for as long as I possibly can and to hopefully encourage more volunteers in doing so."

For more information, visit www.specialolympicsbroward.org.

Scott Fishman can be reached at scfishman@tribune.com.