



Bio-Ball Brings Pharma and Biotech to Center Court for a Good Cause

March Madness hits close to home in Marlborough this month, as Sunovion scientists, execs and sales reps team up with Special Olympics athletes to prepare for Bio-Ball, a fun one-day basketball tournament that brings 16 local biotech and pharma companies together for some friendly competition and fundraising. The 11th annual Bio-Ball tournament, to be held on Saturday, March 21 in Cambridge, supports the 1,800 Special Olympics athletes participating in basketball programs throughout Massachusetts. Over the past decade, the Bio-Ball program has raised nearly \$1 million for the cause.

With the Special Olympics state headquarters just a stone's throw (three miles) from Sunovion's Marlborough campus, Bio-Ball makes for a perfect community partnership. Our company's focus on mental health and wellness also meshes well with the mission of Special Olympics: To provide year-round sports training and competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for all children and adults with intellectual disabilities. Sunovion has been participating in this program since its inception, with many of our team members playing year after year.

One such enthusiast, Eric Bennett, Associate Director Marketing, has participated in Bio-Ball since 2008 and five years ago took over reign as official Team Captain. In his current role on the psychiatry marketing team he works closely with key opinion leaders and the national congresses on strategy for LATUDA. Asked if he has a strategy for winning this year's tournament, Eric laughs and says it's not that cut-throat. It's less about competition and more about teamwork, camaraderie and giving back to the community, he explains.

Eric says he's gained so much from the experience over the years and has learned a lot, too. For instance, like many others he went into the program with the misconception that The Special Olympics is just for kids. It's for adults as well. "In past years we've had teams made up mostly of teenagers, other years we've had players in their 30s, 40s and 50s," he says. "The oldest Special Olympics player was 58."

Here's how Bio-Ball works: First, 16 biotech/pharma companies each field a basketball team of their own. Next, these company teams are each paired with a local Special Olympics basketball team to form an integrated team. On the morning of the tournament, the 16 integrated teams are divided into two divisions and spend the day competing in individual skills and 5-on-5 competitions. The two top integrated teams face off in the championship game as the grand finale.

Are the Sunovion team members serious contenders? "Let's just say that we try not to hurt ourselves," jokes Eric. "This annual tournament reminds us that we're all a year older."

Kidding aside, Eric stresses that what makes this day so special is the hands-on experience and the involvement with the players. "Fundraising is important," he says, "but it's just as important to donate from a time perspective."

"It's really about the experience, about being there. Seeing a little girl with Down syndrome who's only five feet tall do this amazing 3-point shot—it's a feeling you just can't describe. It's what makes the whole day worth it."



photo credit: specialolympicsma.wordpress.com

To learn more about the event visit the [Bio-Ball website](#). And if you'd like to cheer on the Sunovion team from the bleachers, mark your calendars for March 21st! Address below:

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