

## 902nd MI Group supports local Special Olympics

**Tina Miles**

902nd MI Group

Personnel from the 902nd MI Group and two subordinate units, the 308th and 310th MI Battalions, volunteered in a unique Navy sponsored "Run, Jump 'n' Throw" Special Olympics event. Featuring over 198 special needs and general education students competing in track and field events, the event was held at Ridgeway Elementary School in Severn, Md. May 15.

In a spin off of the Special Olympics traditional competition, the Ridgeway Invitational paired special needs students with partners who were non-handicapped. Participants came from five Anne Arundel County elementary schools.

One of those schools was Meade Heights Elementary, with which the 902nd MI Group is a Partner in Education.

The event kicked-off with an opening ceremony and consisted of four events: standing long-jump, 50-meter dash, softball throw, and a turbo javelin competition.

Volunteers served as escorts, with two escorts assigned to a heat of eight to 10 athletes. Each escort stayed with their group throughout the entire event, tracking scorecards, keeping the athletes organized, and moving from one venue to the next.

Hugs, high-fives and cheers from spectators were the biggest rewards to both competing and volunteering. Shouts of support and signs



photo by Tina Miles

**Maj. Barrett, deputy commander, 902nd MI Group and Zack Bowman, a student at Meade, celebrate as Bowman receives his medal. Bowman was one of 198 special needs and general education students who participated.**

made by the younger elementary students were waved as each athlete took their starting position. The camaraderie and good-sportsmanship between all of the participants was apparent throughout the day.

The competitors also enjoyed lunch with their volun-

teers, comparing strategy and exchanging congratulations. The invitational closed with an awards ceremony.

As the event concluded, one thing was certain - everyone who participated in and supported the Special Olympics walked away a winner.

**902nd MI Group supports local Special Olympics (cont'd)**

*The participants wave and smile for the camera after the Special Olympics event concluded.*

*photos by Tina Miles*



*All of the 902nd MI Group volunteers who helped to make the "Run, Jump 'n' Throw Ridgeway Invitational" possible gather for a photo after the closing ceremony.*