



Helping Out: at the So What Else 2025 Olympics

By: Diana H. Zhao

My first experience working with So What Else was the most rewarding and fun time I ever had, while helping others at the same time. It was bright in the morning, and I had the opportunity to volunteer at So What Else Olympics partnering with CYOC's (Capital Youth Outreach Club) help. So What Else is a nonprofit organization that provides enrichment programs and essential services to children and families across the D.C. and Maryland area.

Held at a community center in Maryland, the event aimed to provide youth with a day filled with games, learning, and inspiration. CYOC and So What Else partnered to host a mini "Youth Olympics," complete with friendly competitions, health and wellness stations, and motivational workshops. Their idea was simple but powerful: create a one-day "Olympics" where kids could play, compete in team games, and experience the joy of belonging and accomplishment—regardless of their background or abilities. CYOC partnered with them to help organize. I wasn't very excited when I got there, but little did I know how much fun I would have once the event started.

On the morning of the event, it was chilly and started to drizzle a little bit. It wasn't supposed to rain today. I was worried the event was going to get cancelled because of the rain. I remember arriving early that morning, the

parking lot still mostly empty, with volunteers buzzing around carrying food, drinks, and supplies. The sun hadn't fully risen yet, but the energy in the air was booming. I arrived early to help set up stations, and at the event, there were all sorts of fruits, drinks, food, snacks, and activities laid out. After all the stuff from the van had been unloaded, we got right to work. CYOC was taking care of the fruit salad station with one of the So What Else people, but there were so many more stations for example, the hydration station, STEM station, which is like science activities, art station, and so much more. The CYOC members helped carry the fruits and supplies to the station. There were grapes, watermelon, mandarin, bananas, cantaloupe, and strawberries.

After we got set up, the kids started to pull up in school buses, the CYOC team got straight to work, a few CYOC members were at the fruit station, and some were at different stations helping out. My sister and I were still at the fruit salad station making fruit salads. I never thought making fruit salads was going to be this much fun. Throughout the day, I also worked at different stations where kids learned about nutrition, leadership, and teamwork. So What Else had put together these enrichment booths to make the event more than just sport. CYOC volunteers, including myself, rotated through these areas, guiding small groups, asking questions, and helping the kids reflect on what they learned.

As the day wrapped up, medals were handed out—not for first or second place, but

for effort, spirit, and kindness. Each child left with a backpack with school supplies they might need, a few small gifts, and something even more valuable: a sense of pride. Watching them walk away, some hugging their volunteers, some waving goodbye like old friends, I felt a wave of emotion. What we had done that day wasn't just about fun—it was about showing every single child that they were seen, valued, and capable of greatness. By the end of the day, I was exhausted—but in the best way. I felt like I had been part of something real and important. Volunteering at this event showed me how much power there is in small acts of service. I didn't have to be an Olympic athlete to make an impact—I just had to show up, be present, and believe in the people around me.

Volunteering with CYOC at the 2025 So What Else Community Olympics reminded me that real change doesn't always come from grand gestures. Over 30 people came and helped at the So What Else mini "Olympics."

Summer Games, Lasting Impact

By: Camille Hu

This summer, CYOC came together with other organization to help with the So What Else Summer Youth Olympic on August 1, nearly 400 students attended, from different schools, city, and district. Around 70 volunteers attended to help, from different organizations, ethnicity, and culture.

Over the course of the day, volunteers served in multiple roles, from setting up Olympic-themed activity, stations, and managing sports games to guiding participants through relays and cheering them on from the sidelines. There were stations like nutrition, STEM, making slime, making lava lamp, hydration, etc., helping younger kids stay engaged throughout the event. I was a part of the nutrition station; there was different sorts of fruits provided for those students who attended the sport games. Grapes, mandarin, watermelon, cantaloupe, strawberries, and bananas were all included, giving students a variety of choices and a lot of nutrition.

Beyond stations, there was, of course, sport events. Basketball, flag football, frisbee, etc. All sorts of sports were included to let students have fun and compete. At the end, there was prizes that you could take if you win, backpacks, back to school supplies, toys, etc., helping students get ready to go back to school.

Through CYOC and this event, I didn't just choose a cause—I found my cause. I want to continue working with youth, helping them

grow into confident, compassionate individuals. I'm inspired to pursue more service projects in the future, and possibly even a career path that involves youth development or community advocacy.

Volunteering with So What Else this summer wasn't just about sports or summer fun—it was about building bridges, sparking joy, and giving kids a safe place to grow. I'm proud to have been a part of it, and I'm excited to keep making a difference, one small act at a time.



今年夏天, CYOC 与其他组织合作, 共同参与了8月1日举行的“So What Else夏季青年奥运会”。此次活动吸引了近400名来自不同学校、城市和地区的学生参与。此外, 还有约70名志愿者到场协助, 他们来自不同的组织、民族和文化背景。

在整个活动过程中, 志愿者们承担了多种角色, 从布置奥运主题活动站、管理体育比赛, 到引导参与者完成接力赛并从场边为他们加油助威。活动站包括营养站、STEM站、制作史莱姆站、制作熔岩灯站、补水站等, 帮助年幼的孩子们在整个活动中保持参与度。我参与了营养站的工作; 为参加体育游戏的学生提供了多种水果。葡萄、橘子、西瓜、哈密瓜、草莓和香蕉均有供应, 为学生提供了丰富的选择和充足的营养。

除了站点活动外, 当然还有体育赛事。篮球、橄榄球、飞盘等各类运动项目均被纳入其中, 旨在让学生在享受乐趣的同时展开竞技。活动最后, 获胜者可领取奖品, 包括书包、开学用品、玩具等, 助力学生们为返校做好准备。

通过CYOC和这次活动, 我不仅选择了一个事业——我找到了我的人生事业。我希望继续与年轻人合作, 帮助他们成长为自信、富有同情心的人。我受到启发, 未来将致力于更多服务项目, 甚至可能选择一条与青年发展或社区倡导相关的事业道路。

今年夏天, 我参与了“So What Else”的志愿者活动, 这不仅仅是关于体育或夏日乐趣——它关乎搭建桥梁、点燃欢乐, 以及为孩子们提供一个安全成长的空间。我为能参与其中感到自豪, 并期待继续通过点滴行动, 持续创造积极影响。