



SPECIAL OLYMPICS, THE GLOBAL MOVEMENT

With sports at the core, Special Olympics is a leader in the field of intellectual disability and the world's largest movement dedicated to promoting respect, acceptance, inclusion, and human dignity for people with intellectual disabilities. With programming in the areas of health, youth and education, family support, research and policy change, Special Olympics has...

- More than **3.1 million** athletes
- **227** Special Olympics Programs in **175** countries
- **30** Olympic-type summer and winter sports
- **7** regional offices around the world, including Ireland, Egypt, South Africa, India, China, Panama, and United States
- More than **750,000** volunteers
- More than **300,000** coaches
- Nearly **30,000** competitions around the world each year

Special Olympics Mission

To provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

Special Olympics Vision

The Special Olympics movement will transform communities by inspiring people throughout the world to open their minds, accept and include people with intellectual disabilities and thereby celebrate the similarities common to all people.

Eligibility

To be eligible to participate in Special Olympics, an athlete must be at least eight years of age and identified by an agency or professional as having one of the following conditions: intellectual disability, cognitive delays as measured by formal assessment, or significant learning or vocational problems due to cognitive delay that have required specially designed instruction.

Competition

Special Olympics athletes are divided to compete in categories based on gender, age, and ability level. All Special Olympics activities reflect the values, standards, traditions, ceremonies, and events embodied in the modern Olympic movement. These Olympic-type activities have been broadened and enriched to celebrate the moral and spiritual qualities of persons with intellectual disabilities so as to enhance their dignity and self-esteem.

History and Leadership

Special Olympics began in 1968 with the First International Special Olympics Games at Soldier Field in Chicago. Since then, millions have benefited from the movement.

J. Brady Lum is President and Chief Operating Officer.

Timothy P. Shriver is Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of Special Olympics Board of Directors.

The Lead Board Director and Vice Chair is **Stephen M. Carter**, Chief Executive Officer, Superior Essex, Inc., the Board Vice Chairs are **Nadia Comaneci**, Olympic Gymnastics Gold Medalist; and **Raymond J. Lane**, Partner, Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers.

Eunice Kennedy Shriver is the Founder of Special Olympics and its Honorary Chairperson.



Special Olympics Initiatives

Special Olympics Healthy Athletes™ is an initiative designed to help Special Olympics athletes improve their health and fitness, leading to an enhanced sports experience and improved well-being. Athletes receive health services at Special Olympics competitions, while healthcare professionals learn about the health needs of Special Olympics athletes, gaining confidence in volunteering their skills to an underserved population and thus creating more inclusive medical practices.

Youth and Schools Outreach – Special Olympics is leveraging sports as a platform to teach acceptance and inclusion to young people around the world. Project UNIFY is a program which builds Special Olympics in schools and is engaging, motivating and activating young people through many existing programs including the **Special Olympics Get Into It™** is a K-12 service-learning curriculum, **Special Olympics Unified Sports™** and the “R-Word” campaign which is building respect through language. Global Youth Summits are also held to unite youth from throughout the world in the spirit of change. In addition, the **Special Olympics Young Athlete Program** provides opportunities for young athletes between the ages of 2 ½ and 7 years of age to learn basic sports skills and motor activities to prepare them for Special Olympics competition.

Special Olympics Athlete Leadership Programs (ALPs) offer athletes the opportunity to take active leadership roles both on and off the playing field. Athletes serve on the Boards of Directors, officiate competitions, coach other athletes, act as spokespersons and make decisions about the future of Special Olympics.

Special Olympics Unified Sports™ is a program that brings together people with and without intellectual disabilities on the same athletic team.

Family Support Network gives families support in communities within Special Olympics. Understanding the challenges of raising a special needs child, Special Olympics has created the Family Support Network to provide a connection for families of Special Olympics athletes. There are more than 100 networks in more than 60 countries.

Benefits of Special Olympics

Individuals who compete in Special Olympics develop improved physical fitness and motor skills and greater self confidence. They exhibit courage and enthusiasm and build lasting friendships. These life skills enhance their ability to live normal productive lives. More than ever, Special Olympics athletes hold jobs, own homes, go to school and successfully confront life challenges on a daily basis.

Through millions of individual acts of inclusion where people with and without intellectual disabilities are brought together through Special Olympics programs, longstanding myths are dispelled, negative attitudes changed, and new opportunities to embrace and celebrate the giftedness of people with intellectual disabilities are created. Ultimately, the Special Olympics movement can transform communities by inspiring people throughout the world to open their minds, accept and include people with intellectual disabilities and thereby celebrate the similarities common to all people.

Funding

Special Olympics receives funding in support of the movement from individuals, corporations, foundations, government and restricted grants. The vast majority of funding received is from individuals through the Special Olympics direct mail program.

The Law Enforcement Torch Run™ for Special Olympics is the movement's largest grass-roots fundraiser and public awareness vehicle for Special Olympics in the world, made up of more than 85,000 law enforcement officers in all 50 U.S. states, twelve Canadian provinces and 35 countries. Since 1981, the Law Enforcement Torch Run™ for Special Olympics has raised more than US\$235 million, with a record US\$34 million raised in 2008 alone.