

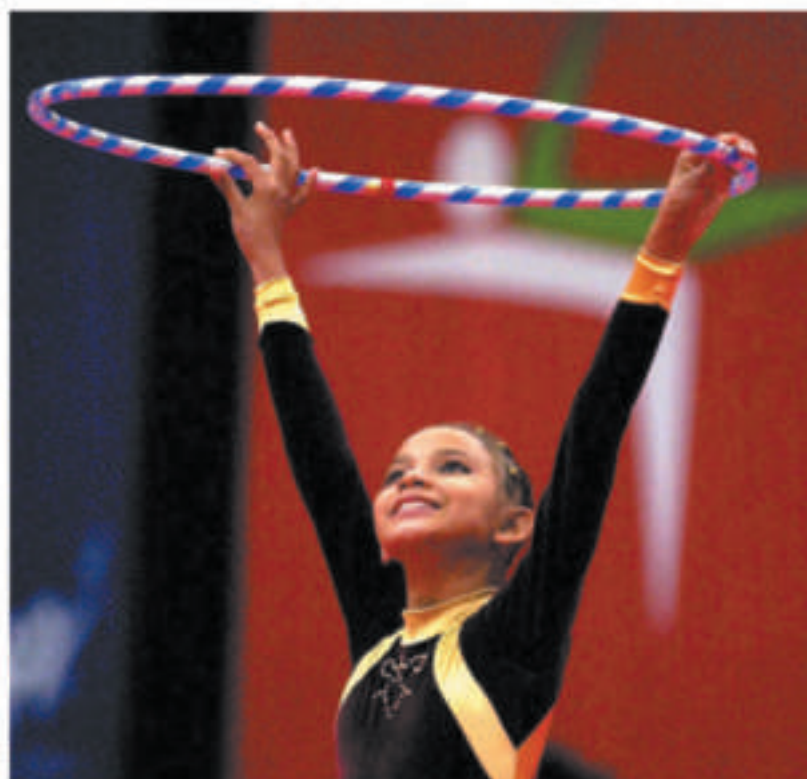


*Special Olympics*



# Athlete Recruitment Guide

Shared Practices for Recruiting  
Special Olympics Athletes



## **ATHLETE RECRUITMENT**

**Shared Practices for Recruiting  
Special Olympics Athletes**



***Special Olympics***

March 2004

Dear Athletes, Coaches, Family Members and Volunteers of Special Olympics:

Special Olympics is initiating what will perhaps be the most important tasks that will impact the growth of our Movement as we look to 2005 and beyond. We are looking to you **to expand the use of tools and resources at all levels of your Program that focus on doubling the number of Special Olympics athletes with intellectual disabilities<sup>1</sup> of all ages.**

Doubling the numbers of athletes will not be an easy task. If it was easy, Programs would have been doing it all along and our Board of Directors would not have identified this goal as **the** most essential for the growth of the Movement. In the recent *SPiRiT* magazine, Special Olympics Chairman and CEO Timothy Shriver reiterates the importance of this goal:

We are facing tough economic times and many of our volunteers and Program leaders are struggling. But these tough times are in no way diminishing our resolve. We will not shrink from our goals, and we will not reduce our commitment to our athletes and families. We will continue with persistence, determination and passion to welcome 1 million more new athletes, to follow our athlete leaders and to change the world.

As a leader in this movement, you are capable of making this goal a reality. We thank those Programs who have contributed information to this guide; however, this resource is not yet complete. It needs your suggestions, ideas and recommendations on how a local, sub or national/state Program can successfully recruit additional athletes.

In addition to the athlete recruitment ideas presented in this packet, there are an assortment of resources in the appendices we hope you will find useful.

In 2004, this resource will be distributed globally and made available to every country in our Movement. If you are interested in being part of Version 2, see Appendix C where you will find a simple "Athlete Recruitment" survey that should be sent to your Regional Special Olympics office by 30 September 2004 to be included in the next version.

Finally, thanks are given to the Athlete Recruitment Resource Team made up of Special Olympics athletes, Organizational Development staff, Program staff and volunteers for assisting in the development of this resource through survey design, data collection from Programs and other contributions.

To secure additional copies please use the Special Olympics Knowledge Management System (KMS link by following this sequence:

- Log-in
- Knowledge and Collaboration
- Athletes
- Recruitment/Retention

For more information, please contact [organizationaldevelopment@specialolympics.org](mailto:organizationaldevelopment@specialolympics.org) or phone Ron Vederman, Ed.D., Director of Athlete Recruitment, School and Youth Outreach, for Special Olympics at +1 (202)628-3630.

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<sup>1</sup> This document uses the term intellectual disability although various terminologies are used throughout the world, including learning disability, developmental disability, intellectual handicaps, mental handicaps and mental retardation.



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- Ricardo Thorton, Athlete, Special Olympics District of Columbia

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- Mathieu Nelessen, Director of Education & Outreach, Special Olympics New Jersey
- Viveca Torrey, Executive Director, Special Olympics Mexico

## **SPECIAL OLYMPICS ATHLETES DISCUSS THE VALUE OF ATHLETE RECRUITMENT**

### **Erin Holloway, Global Messenger, Special Olympics Colorado:**

I have been involved with Special Olympics since 1980. Some of the reasons I have stayed involved with Special Olympics are:

- Special Olympics has given me a life. Before I became involved with Special Olympics I had no life at all. I stayed in my room with the door closed.
- Special Olympics has given me the feeling of having a family, people who care about me and encourage me to keep pushing myself. Growing up, I did not have family that cared about me.
- I feel proud to be able compete in the same sports I watch my athletic heroes compete in.
- I have learned that Special Olympics is more than winning a gold medal or ribbon. I am able to do things that people said I would never be able to do.
- I became involved with ALPs [Athlete Leadership Programs] because I wanted to give back to Special Olympics for the life it has given me and to make sure that other people with intellectual disabilities have the same opportunities I have had.

### **Manwadu Rofhiwa, Global Youth Summit, Polakwane, South Africa**

I want to see Special Olympics grow so we can participate in more sports like soccer and athletics and so that I can travel around South Africa doing sports. I enjoy meeting new friends and have the chance to play together in our school and feel safe around Special Olympics.

### **Ricardo Thorton, Global Messenger, Special Olympics District of Columbia**

Friendships and socialization opportunities – Every athlete will tell you that the most important aspect of Special Olympics participation is the friends that are made along the way. To keep us involved, every event at any level should include the opportunity to interact with friends. It doesn't have to be fancy, just time and space to be with each other. You may want to break for lunch and allow everyone the time together. Play some music, maybe. The important thing is that time has been built into the event schedule to allow everyone, athletes, volunteers, family, to have some down time together that is also fun time together. This will keep everyone coming back.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of Special Olympics is 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.



## GLOSSARY OF COMMONLY USED TERMS

**Athlete Recruitment** generally means to develop global, regional, national, sub-Program and local Program strategies for bringing new athletes into the Movement, giving them full opportunity to the Special Olympics Mission Statement above. Strategies are based on shared practices from around the Special Olympics Movement as well as findings from related organizations in sports, human/social services agencies, educational institutions, media relations, vocational agencies and more. Athlete recruitment tools are developed for use with these recruitment channels in mind:

- **Families**
- **School settings**
- **Community sports programs**
- **Adult vocational settings**
- **Institutions**
- **Community living arrangements**
- **Governmental organizations**

**Athlete Retention** is a natural extension of athlete recruitment. However, retention has extremely unique characteristics required to effectively plan, develop, implement and evaluate strategies. With the goal of expanding athlete participation to 2 million over the next two years, understanding the factors that influence participation, retention and dropout among its athletes is critical for Special Olympics' growth. Special Olympics Program leaders have suggested a variety of reasons for athlete non-continuance. These have included: transition challenges from school settings to community-based work environments or recreational opportunities; lack of reliable transportation; competition with other activities (including jobs and hobbies); scheduling problems; lack of interest by athletes and caregivers; lack of awareness in terms of joining the program; and lack of interest in remaining physically active or competing in organized sports.

A research study in collaboration with the University of Massachusetts-Boston and the University of Utah is just beginning to identify the factors that contribute to retention and to dropout among Special Olympics athletes. This research will help Special Olympics identify the factors that tend to support athlete retention rather than undermine it, which, in turn, will enable Programs to implement feasible retention strategies that will maintain and support growth. Results from this study will be available around June 2005.

**Special Olympics Volunteers** are present at all levels of the movement to ensure that every athlete is offered a quality sports training and competition experience. Our volunteer pool is dedicated and diverse. Volunteers include: civic and fraternal groups, high school and college students, amateur and professional athletes, corporate employees, sports officials, coaches, teachers, parents and retired persons. Volunteers can get involved at the state/provincial, national or international level, or offer their services locally at a Special Olympics Program in their community. Some volunteers offer a few hours of their time a year at specific events, while others work several hours a week year-round.

**Special Olympics Athlete Leadership Programs (ALPs)** offers athletes the opportunity to take active roles both on and off the playing field. ALPs allows athletes to enjoy Special Olympics through self-directed, meaningful participation in virtually any aspect of the program. Athletes serve on Boards of Directors, officiate competitions, coach other athletes and make decisions about the organization's future.

**Special Olympics Unified Sports®** is a sports training and competition opportunity that combines approximately equal numbers of Special Olympics athletes and athletes without intellectual disabilities (called Partners) on sports teams for training and competition. Age and ability matching of athletes and Partners is defined on a sport-by-sport basis.

**Special Olympics Family Support Network** helps families to help each other. This initiative gives families a support system within Special Olympics. Based on the Parent-to-Parent model, veteran Special Olympics families have an opportunity to mentor families who are new to Special Olympics, providing them with informational and emotional support.

**Special Olympics Get Into It (SO Get Into It™)** is a free service-learning curriculum for all grade levels that celebrates the diverse gifts of every student, whatever his or her ability. The materials are designed as a relatively simple way to achieve several closely related student learning goals. SO Get Into It™ involves students in learning about those who are different but who can nonetheless inspire the world with the lesson that we all have gifts to contribute no matter what our limitations.



## WE ARE GROWING – INTRODUCTION

### BACKGROUND

Special Olympics has a vision to be an unprecedented global Movement which, through sports training and competition, improves the lives of people with intellectual disabilities and, in turn, the lives of everyone they touch. In 2000, Special Olympics made a bold commitment to double the number of athletes participating in the Movement by 2005. To support this commitment to growth, Special Olympics established the following goals:

- **Achieve quality growth – 2 million athletes by the end of 2005.**
- **Become a worldwide Movement led by athletes.**
- **Commit to changing the attitudes of every person on earth.**

Since 1968, Special Olympics has offered sports training and athletic competition in Olympic-type sports for persons with intellectual disabilities. These sports opportunities are offered free of charge to qualified individuals on a year-round (seasonal) basis in more than 154 countries.

Some interesting facts compiled through the recently completed 2003 Special Olympics Global Census:

- Between the 2002 and 2003 census, Special Olympics increased its Special Olympics athlete and participant count by **173,741**;
- At year-end 2003, there were **1,380,396** participating athletes and participants, up from 1,206,655 in 2002, which represents **14 percent growth**;
- The Movement has increased by 394,423 athletes and participants worldwide since the 2000 census;
- Approximately one-third of the athletes are 22 years of age or older. Two-thirds are between the ages of 8 (lowest qualifying age) and 21;
- The ratio of male to female athletes remained the same: 2 to 1 from 2000 to 2002 to 2003. This means that 60 percent of Special Olympics athletes are male;
- The top five sports – athletics, bowling, basketball, football (soccer) and aquatics – remained the same from 2002 and 2003.

Athletes who participate in Special Olympics are encouraged to continue participation even as they progress from grade to grade in school, graduate from school, begin working or involvement in other community-based programs and become mature adults. In the event athletes or their families relocate, there is the potential for athletes to continue participating in their new location.

Still, with approximately 170 million persons in the world with an intellectual disability, the vast majority of these individuals who could participate do not. Given the growth in Special Olympics Programs over the years, one could expect the number of participating athletes to grow dramatically. This is especially true if athletes were being retained successfully. Clearly, many athletes do stop participating for periods of time or permanently, although no good quantification of this phenomenon exists. In this next section, you will see the six primary methods for athlete growth put into practice throughout all regions. Several national and state-level Programs will be featured, with a brief Description: of how a particular strategy was applied to bring about growth.

## SUCCESSFUL APPROACHES TO GROWTH

In this section, you will learn about six common approaches shared by regions that have contributed to athlete growth. These six were based on analysis of results and other qualitative input from census data collected in 2002-2003. These approaches, discussed in more detail below, are:

- Local Program development
- Targeting sport-specific development;
- Leveraging the infrastructure that supports those with intellectual disabilities;
- Recruiting and developing strong, dynamic leadership;
- Direct investment coupled with focused staff support; and
- High-profile awareness-raising events.

For 35 years, Special Olympics has been recruiting athletes to the Movement. Regions have been creating successful strategies to accomplish athlete recruitment goals. During the summer and fall of 2003 we asked Programs to share their ideas and have presented the results here. Together with these six approaches are sample practices put into effect by Programs.

**Note:** These are grouped in an alphabetical list by region, starting with Africa, then in an alphabetical list of Programs within each region.

### LOCAL PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Local Programs comprise all Special Olympics direct service delivery outlets (including independent Special Olympics clubs, specialized schools, independent-living facilities and professional sports clubs) offering training and competition opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities according to Special Olympics rules and guidelines. Local Program focus creates ongoing opportunities for Special Olympics athlete involvement and greater athlete satisfaction, which are critical to Special Olympics growth.

One area in particular that continues to be promising for Programs is that of reaching out to the 6- and 7-year-old eligible population. Special Olympics encourages these young athletes and families to participate in training activities at a local level after completing the proper Program registration requirements. Involving them at the age where many athletes are just entering school is a good idea because this is how the sub-Program and local Program can begin to establish a relationship with not only the teacher, but the family member as well. It is also a good idea to simply invite this age group, along with a teacher and/or family member, to observe a training session or to be a spectator at a competition, where they can network with coaches, other family members, educators, event organizers, etc., to gain a better understanding about Special Olympics for when they come of age to join officially.



## 1. Special Olympics Africa

### a. Kenya

#### Description:

The formation of clubs in various zones in each province and District. We visit the clubs, recruit families and volunteers, keep the data and organize seminars, training sessions and clinics. We initiate local boards to manage and monitor the local Programs and, as a result, we have recruited 550 new athletes.

#### What has worked?

Connecting with parents and coaches together at a particular center was easy because there were already established recruitment centers, e.g., schools, assessment centers and the school's sports program. The difficulty was the diversity of the provinces based on geographical and political divisions and lack of funds to transport the staff to the centers. Changing the attitudes and creating interest among many volunteers and staff is a challenge. The availability of equipment and sports facilities to be used, funds and creating public awareness among families and community on the rehabilitative value of sports to the individuals with intellectual disabilities would help.

It is easy to get to other families who have not heard about Special Olympics but have athletes who can benefit from the same. It also involves government officials in respective government offices and the community in creating awareness of the potentials of athletes with intellectual disabilities, partnership with the corporate community on sponsorship of the sub-programs and clubs for their activities.

It would help to provide more opportunities for training and competition. In addition, looking into the nutritional and general well-being of the athletes from poor backgrounds would create a conducive and attractive atmosphere to attract other athletes and families to join the program. Provision of equipment and facilities is another area that would make the strategy very attractive.

### b. Tanzania

#### Description:

We trained coaches to whom we gave assignments to recruit athletes. The target number we started with was 2,000 athletes. Most of these coaches were schoolteachers who trained all their students to join the Program but also went to the surrounding community to sensitize people with intellectual disabilities to join the Program. As a result, about 1,500 new athletes have joined.

To determine the increase in the number of athletes, we used registration forms and information from sub-Program Directors. The athletes are from many schools throughout the country. There are eight special schools and 80 units within mainstream primary schools.

#### What has worked?

It was easier to get school students to join the Program, but it was a bit difficult to recruit others from the community. It all worked anyway and it is still working as more athletes are joining the Program.

By ensuring there is more training and competitions at school, community and national level, we can succeed even more. It is important to mention here that both athletes and coaches enjoy competitions very much and would like to have these more often, as well as Games if possible. This motivates them into doing more practices and motivates other athletes to join the Program.

It was very productive to use teachers as coaches because they are with the athletes most of the time and they know the athletes personally. Having periodic seminars for the coaches and bringing in new ones would be helpful, as well as having frequent Games at all levels.

### **c. Uganda**

#### **Description:**

The strategy was to reach out to districts and carry out a sub-Program committees and District Co-coordinators training. In that, we created Special Olympics District Committees responsible for recruiting at least 50 athletes within a year's time. This resulted in a total of 1,800 athletes over the year.

#### **What has worked?**

Working from the national down to the grass-roots level was helpful in ensuring support at all levels. We enabled the families to hear about and access the Special Olympics opportunity of year-round sports training and competition.

- Sub-committees were formed in 45 districts in Uganda.
- District Co-coordinators were nominated.
- Local sports training activities were started in 44 district headquarters and each of the five divisions of Kampala mega city.

Challenges ahead include the following:

- Retention of athletes beyond school-going age.
- 70 percent of the trained manpower turned inactive.

Making an immediate follow-up to the seminars could lead to consistent training and competition. Our next step will be to empower the sub-Programs (districts) to develop their own athlete recruitment program through continued training workshops, organized by the national office out in the districts.

## **2. Special Olympics East Asia**

### **a. Taipei**

#### **Description:**

A variety of opportunities for recruitment and remaining with the Program:

1. To provide opportunities for athletes to participate in a variety of Special Olympics sports training events through the help of their school arrangement.
2. To let senior athletes guide new athletes as assistant coaches.



3. To help athletes play the role of messengers to recruit new members from their communities to take part in Special Olympics activities.
4. To train proper athletes to join Special Olympics Chinese Taipei as ALPs participants or volunteers.

### **What has worked?**

Special Olympics Chinese Taipei has been active in carrying out our athlete retention strategy, and we hope there will be more junior and senior high schools to join us. In addition, we can use family members and volunteers to make use of more time to keep in touch with schools about staying involved with Special Olympics. Perhaps having more Special Olympics activity posters, videotapes, etc., to be displayed in schools can help.

## **3. Special Olympics North America**

### **a. Indiana**

#### **Description:**

County Program Development – athletes register only one time with the County Program. Special Olympics Indiana is developing community-based Programs, usually open to all eligible athletes within a given county. Run by a volunteer management team, the county Program is organized to conduct a year-round training program in a variety of sports. Once an athlete registers for this Program, they stay registered (no transition issues between school and work). This eliminates transition issues from school to community, given a “life-time” registration process.

There is usually a person or two on the management team responsible for recruitment of new athletes. Accreditation standards are established for county Programs related to outreach, based on percent of the county's population registered, balance between youth and adult participation, increase from previous year, etc. This becomes the framework by which outreach goals are established.

Most importantly, the implementation of county Programs is instrumental to accomplishing the Special Olympics mission of providing sports training and competition opportunities to all individuals with intellectual disabilities. County Programs mean:

- committees sharing responsibility, not individual leaders burning out;
- Programs open to all eligible athletes, not only to their clients/students;
- year-round training programs, not occasional training programs;
- solid, long-term operation, not Programs that die when their leader quits;
- improved communication and networking, not isolated, out-of-touch locals;
- increased community involvement, not isolated organizations; and
- growth in number of athletes and sports, not status quo.

### **What has worked?**

Given the one-time registration process coupled with systematic training of the volunteers coordinating this process, the athletes are not lost in transition. We have data that shows it increased our athlete count by 6 percent to 10 percent. The percentage of youth (under age 21) participating continues to decline. We believe this is because:

- Youth now stay involved as adults;
- The number of school-based Programs has decreased dramatically; and
- Difficulties in recruiting school personnel to serve on management teams (outside the school realm).

### **b. New Jersey**

#### **Description:**

Special Olympics New Jersey has designed a school- and community-based sports skills training program called Get Into Our Game (GIOG). The GIOG program was developed to recruit new Special Olympics athletes within New Jersey schools and community-based organizations. The program is a comprehensive Physical Education/Adapted Physical Education program that comprises a detailed three-sport curriculum, sports equipment and additional teaching tools.

### **What has worked?**

Special Olympics New Jersey has identified 31 target school districts that have the potential of yielding 12,216 new Special Olympics athletes for which we will target and recruit 6,000 new athletes in a three-year period. In the last two years the GIOG program has successfully recruited 1,300 new athletes in 40 new schools throughout the state.

### **c. Oklahoma**

#### **Description:**

“Under 8 – Stars of the Future” is a training day held at our State Summer Games. These future athletes are given training in several track and field events as well as provided a fun field day experience.

### **What has worked?**

Participation increased more than 100 percent from 2002 to 2003. Those 7-year-olds in 2002 competed as 8-year-olds at area and state events in 2003. We are able to reach future athletes and involve their families. These families also go on our Family Focus Newsletter that is sent three to four times a year. This newsletter provides direct information to families in a timely fashion as it relates to events and activities.



## SPORT DEVELOPMENT

Sport development approaches identify specific sports to implement across Special Olympics Programs within a region. Regional Sport Directors work with Program Sport Directors to identify training facilities, recruit athletes, train coaches and stage competitions. The selection of sports is largely driven by regional preference, demographics and access to sport facilities. Some examples of sport development approaches are outlined below:

- A majority of the regions included athletics and football as target sports for development throughout the region. Athletics is traditionally popular across the Movement and offers multiple disciplines for competition. Europe/Eurasia focused on football, leveraging its regional and worldwide popularity and low operating costs. In addition, football helped drive Special Olympics Unified Sports®. Replication of specific sports throughout a region can also be leveraged for regional single-sport events, increasing competition opportunities for athletes.
- East Asia targeted bocce and bowling to address age, gender and ability gaps, helping them reach older athletes and athletes with lower abilities. Latin America identified volleyball as a sport to reach more females. Middle East/North Africa cited success through its focused women's basketball tournament.
- Increasing local competition opportunities resulted in a greater number of athletes (rather than participants) and enhanced athlete experience. Egypt's focus on local competitions resulted in a significant shift from 2000 to 2002 in the athlete to participant ratio.
- Another approach was the creation of partnerships with sports organizations, such as the Union des Associations Européennes de Football (UEFA) or the United States Professional Golf Association. These relationships produced major public awareness-building events and funding. UEFA has become a key sponsor of region-wide soccer events known as Special Olympics European Football Week. Sport partnerships also stimulated growth through funding, as in the case of Laureaus Sport for Good Foundation's support of Special Olympics Unified Sports® expansion in Czech Republic, Slovakia and East Asia.

### 1. Special Olympics Africa

#### a. Kenya

##### Description:

Multiple activities are initiated:

- Maintaining data on the athletes and their families;
- Home visits for the athletes in out-of-school Program;
- Creating clubs for the athletes to go and train at least once a week and keeping a register of attendance and performance level; and
- Drawing up a training program for each athlete for the whole year and monitoring their progress.

### **What has worked?**

The above strategies have worked very well, apart from the home visits which proved difficult with affluent families. Many athletes have realized the benefits of training and associating with other sporting organizations/clubs to enhance their skills and be seen as among the Kenyan sportsmen. As a result, 672 athletes have remained with the Program.

If there was a particular/specific facility to be used by the athletes for training in the major towns in our provinces, it would make this strategy work very well as the athletes could easily go and have training sessions at their own time without particularly waiting for the assigned dates. Include and integrate the high performing athletes into other regular sports to serve as role models to upcoming athletes in order for them to jump over the hurdles ahead of them.

Lack of equipment, funding and technical know-how is the main stumbling block. Attitude, discrimination and stigma are other areas that need to be addressed among the rural community to communicate that acceptance and looking at the ability of the individual rather than the disability develops one's self-esteem and self-worth.

### **b. Seychelles**

#### **Description:**

Conducted outreach programs at the district level in conjunction with the Ministry of Local Government and Sports. Events included sports at the district level and social events, e.g., social gatherings and picnics.

### **What has worked?**

The Ministry, through its district contacts, reached a large part of the population with intellectual disabilities. Families learned more about Special Olympics and other available programs. More involvement of Special Olympics Seychelles staff/volunteers in the activities to better spread the message and to take charge will be needed in the future. In addition, activities could be better planned and Ministry employees could be properly trained beforehand on the functions and mission of Special Olympics.

## **2. Special Olympics Asia Pacific**

### **a. Australia**

#### **Description:**

In Australia some five years ago, we realized that the age of our athletes was increasing and that we did not seem to be getting younger athletes joining the Program. When we examined the situation closely, it was found that there was little or no physical activity or sport being offered to the pupils in the 450 special schools throughout the country. The reasons appeared to be that time and resources were devoted to the very basic life skills that we take for granted. Because of this, we have Special Olympics Coordinators (some paid and some volunteers) visit schools, some dedicated to the disabled and others that have Special Education classes. These Coordinators facilitate, with the assistance of teachers in some cases, a series of motor activities that involve the basic skills of catching, throwing and hitting both moving and stationary objects etc. The participants move from station to station each session. As the athlete becomes more proficient with each skill the degree of difficulty is increased and competition introduced. In the middle of last year we brought all of the schools together for a day of competition.



This program was piloted for two years in conjunction with a research study that measured certain aspects such as adaptive behavior, maladaptive behavior and physical skill acquisition. The results were very encouraging and convinced us to run a small competition among the schools that are involved and to expand the program into other schools. Currently, the program is running in 15 schools affecting 680 pupils and our plan is to reach as many schools as possible over the next three to five years.

### **What has worked?**

While we have not seen many new athletes joining the Special Olympics competitions, it is creating great awareness and promotional opportunities. The aim is to train the teachers to facilitate the program, which has happened in their schools where the program first started. The ultimate purpose of this program is achieving greater public awareness of Special Olympics and for the students to join in Special Olympics activities outside school.

### **b. Indonesia**

#### **Description:**

We started a sport club in every special school. This began with between eight to 10 students who were officially registered on Special Olympics forms. Students and non-students who live near the special school can join the club. Training culminates in a tournament/competition. Families and teachers volunteer to help conduct these sports.

### **What has worked?**

We can get more athletes from that club. However, we do not have full involvement from family members and volunteers. More involvement can be realized by:

- Conducting several socializing activities as part of this program;
- Increasing the involvement of volunteers;
- Involving foundations that have a special school (in Indonesia, most foundations have a special school);
- Conducting a small competition/tournament;
- Holding a family gathering; and
- Conducting Unified Sports Games.

### **c. Philippines**

#### **Description:**

For athletes who have left school, communication with parents, volunteers and teachers inform us about the athletes. We include them in our weekly practice exercises in Metro Manila and "Fun Games" at the district and regional levels which are co-sponsored by McDonald's Philippines, which provides snacks for the athletes.

### **What has worked?**

The program works as the athletes are very enthusiastic in the weekly exercises; however we have to rotate them (schools) due to funding problems. “Fun Games” were conducted in various cities. Local government also sponsored some games (e.g., Quezon City Games sponsored by the Vice Mayor of Quezon City). Athletes look forward to Saturday’s sports events.

## **3. Special Olympics Europe/Eurasia**

### **a. Ireland**

#### **Description:**

Establish Special Olympics clubs in the community and outside of previous recruitment sources of special schools and residential centers.

### **What has worked?**

With support from the National Governing Bodies of sports, 52 clubs (520 athletes) were established in this way between 1998-2002, which included an “Each One Reach One” campaign. Having families involved in the clubs and the involvement of the local community was successful. The greatest difficulties experienced were the lack of volunteers and the costs of establishing clubs in remote parts of the country. Full-time staff devoted to public relations campaign and other human and financial resources would make this a valuable strategy. The future growth of new clubs will target “Greenfield” regions, where no Special Olympics clubs exist or have ever existed.

## **4. Special Olympics Latin America (Responses for the Region as a whole and not Program-specific)**

### **a. School strategy**

#### **Description:**

Schools account for 80 percent of athlete recruitment strategies. These include municipalities, ministry of education and private schools. Athletes aged 8-15 make up approximately 80 percent of athletes in the region, while those aged 16-21 represent 50 percent of participants. Reasons for school growth are:

- New students attending schools;
- Between ages 8-15 there is a greater concentration of the population with intellectual disabilities;
- Better sports proposals offering more sports;
- Addition of ALPs; and
- Families show more interest in participating with their children of 8 - 15 years old.

Schools were the most visited locations for public awareness and exhibition of videos was the most used element. It seems that because of the proximity of the Special Olympics World Summer Games, campaigns were oriented to this audience.

### **What has worked?**

- Competitions to keep athletes active and interested in the Program;
- Increasing the number of opportunities, especially at the local level, first to recruit and then to retain new athletes. Positive experience is critical to maintain the highest level of interest;



- 90 percent of coaches come through school ranks;
- Access to better sport facilities and arenas;
- Increasing and improving the amount of sports equipment available;
- Better trained and prepared coaches;
- More support from volunteer coaches;
- Increasing the number of training sessions;
- Increasing access to sport facilities; and
- Increasing the number of volunteers.

## **Special Olympics Latin America**

### **b. Sports training/competition strategy**

#### **Description:**

Competitions are the key element to maintaining athlete's activity and interest in the Program. Increasing the number of opportunities, especially at local level, is the right strategy first to recruit and then to retain athletes. Positive experiences are critical to maintain the highest level of interest from athletes.

#### **What has worked?**

Generally, 70 percent of Programs throughout the region offered one or more annual competitions held at both the local and national levels. When necessary, sports equipment was provided for training in about 50 percent of the Programs. This was accomplished by partnerships among local governments and sports clubs.

While no Program has one person in charge of this important area of recruitment and retention, the Sport Director often takes on this responsibility. In the near future, a separate person in charge of this position will help Programs to develop more this in this area.

## **5. Special Olympics Middle East/North Africa**

### **a. Bahrain**

#### **Description:**

Bahrain is a geographically small country so it is relatively easy to communicate with families and groups and to transport athletes to training and events. A strong Program exists among the sport clubs operated by the Ministry of Youth and Sports where athletes take part in training and competitions with support from these clubs for facilities, equipment and trained volunteer coaches.

#### **What has worked?**

Training takes place three days a week in groups of approximately 30 athletes, aged 8 and older, per group to allow for more attention to skills development. Family support is present because they are pleased by the results and care they see given to their sons and daughters. Schools are aware of the availability of these community sports programs because we begin introducing Special Olympics to children as young as 6 years old. Coaches are trained through the support of Bahrain University, which conducts coach's institutes and is a source of volunteers from new teachers.

It would be helpful to have more support from the government in order to start new clubs and get more athletes involved with training and competition; however, sports facilities are limited in Bahrain.

## **b. Jordan**

### **Description:**

Twice a week (on Monday and Wednesday) when schools are in session, approximately 600 athletes from 22 special education centers attend a multi-sport training session on fields and facilities donated by the Sports Federation (Jordan Skating Center) for our use. When not attending training at the Skating Center, athletes train in their respective special education centers. Institutions send large numbers of athletes along with their staff who are the trained coaches. In addition, family members send their sons and daughters, with most arriving independently by bus or taxi. Approximately 250 new athletes of the total 1,585 presently registered were recruited from this program using official athlete registration forms.

### **What has worked?**

We started our Program in 1986 with 16 athletes from two special education centers. We are working toward reaching more than 2,500 athletes by 2005. In the weekly training programs, every coach and escort from all our centers and institutions use a registration spreadsheet to register athletes. This information is handed to Special Olympics Jordan Sport Director.

Use of the Day Centers and institutional center's equipment and support in the form of paid coaches from their staff is extremely valuable. We have enjoyed very positive relations with institutional directors for many years because, like the family members, they appreciate what Special Olympics Jordan does for families in terms of greater respect for the athletes.

They need to do more training opportunities for athletes because families see a direct connection between training and their athlete's behavior and self-confidence. They would like more media coverage because after the 2003 World Games, post-event media coverage with the Queen of Jordan and athletes led to more families asking for training and competition opportunities with Special Olympics.

Other suggestions include:

- More training so that the right people who share the same philosophy as Special Olympics will be involved;
- More newspaper stories about the athletes; and
- Developing a family committee that focuses on training athletes and public awareness.

## **6. Special Olympics North America**

### **a. Michigan**

#### **Description:**

Incorporated into the practicum experience for students attending Western Michigan University (WMU), Unified Sports teams were created that practiced together using University facilities and supervisory personnel. Competition within this setting resulted in advancement to the state event for that sport.



### What has worked?

As a result of this, the university now hosts the Special Olympics Michigan State Unified Sports Basketball and Bowling Tournament each year. Classes not only run the state tournaments but also organize a Unified Golf Outing that raises funds for the golf program.

Access to university resources has positively impacted the area Program as well as the state event, and expanded the opportunities for the students of WMU as well. The biggest challenge has been in composition of Unified Sports teams that maintains integrity of intent. Skill levels are often very diverse among students and athletes. Team consistency is another challenge in that WMU student members change from year to year.

Due to the great association with WMU and Special Olympics, WMU now pays for a half-time Graduate Assistant who runs the Program, recruits the students, etc. Most of the coaches in the Program are physical education students and have taken coaching classes or have significant knowledge, thus providing quality coaches for the athletes. Several physical education and recreation professors require the students to be involved in some manner.

### LEVERAGING EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

Leveraging existing systems such as government, education, health, corporate sponsors, volunteer groups and community organizations that support people with intellectual disabilities is a leading growth enabler for Special Olympics Programs.

- Recruitment of athletes through special and integrated schools has been successful as evidenced in large numbers of athletes less than 18 years of age. The “dropping off” of athlete involvement after age 18 is likely due to fewer and less accessible structured organizations (vocational or residential) to leverage.
- On the other hand, an over-reliance on school-based programs can put Program growth at risk due to economic declines or changes in government policies affecting Program’s access to these systems. A considerable portion of the decline experienced in some large city Programs is attributed to changes in the school system’s special education structure when changes are made to reflect school reform trends.
- China’s growth was greatly facilitated by the government support of President Jiang Zemin and by strong relationships with the Chinese Disabled Person’s Federation, education and civil affairs ministries. Growth figures for China clearly demonstrate success with an increase of 103,402 athletes from 2000 to a total of 297,038 athletes in 2003. The majority of this growth was achieved by including Special Olympics in the special schools curriculum. Special Olympics China is now expanding beyond school-based Programs and inviting students who have graduated from school to re-join Special Olympics through training and competitions scheduled on evenings and weekends.

Partnerships with government and educational institutions have resulted in growth, particularly in school-age athletes. To recruit and retain post-school age athletes, national/state Programs should consider partnerships with key community-based organizations and service providers. In addition, there may be continuing opportunities to strengthen relationships with governmental leaders, particularly outside the United States.

Special Olympics must develop government advocacy and outreach capabilities and work collaboratively with Programs to open doors.

## **1. Special Olympics Africa**

### **a. Uganda**

#### **Description:**

We made sure that athletes beyond school-going age were meaningfully employed after job training during their time away from sports training/competition. So far, 10 athletes have been involved in this strategy.

#### **What has worked?**

A good number of the post-school- aged athletes are continuing with the Program and leading meaningful lives in society. The large number of adult athletes (257 more) has not yet been reached with this program. To do this, we need to offer logistical and financial support to both the national office and the sub-Programs to enable them continue with the program. Of the estimated 1 million persons with intellectual disabilities in Uganda, about 300,000 are adults beyond school-going age. We would like to be able to reach at least 25 percent of them by 2005.

## **2. Special Olympics Asia Pacific**

### **a. Philippines**

#### **Description:**

We recruit our athletes primarily from schools with special education programs from both public sector and private schools. Metro Manila alone has about 36 schools registered with Special Olympics Philippines. We also recruit athletes by using parents, volunteers and teachers who inform Special Olympics Philippines about these athletes. We are also in the process of putting up four more chapters, especially in the provinces. The Visayas region and Mindanao were added for 2003, and Luzon and National Capital Region are planned for 2004.

#### **What has worked?**

Our full-time office staffing and computerization program worked as we were able to increase our athlete registration with support given by Department of Education local government and the private sector (parents, teachers, coaches, volunteers, professionals, etc.) who have given their talents, time and attention free of charge to our Programs. However we cannot organize as many events as we want to hold because of financial limitations.

Increasing public awareness of the capability of persons with intellectual disabilities to compete in sports events is helping to convince corporations that sponsoring Special Olympics Philippines events will increase their goodwill and encourage the community to patronize their products.



## **b. Singapore**

### **Description:**

We recruit our athletes mainly through special schools and centers for individual with intellectual disabilities in the following ways:

- Promote Special Olympics sports to the schools/centers by training their teachers/training officers to teach the sports.
- Organize Special Olympics sports competitions every year and invite the special schools/centers to participate. Conduct National Games every four years.
- Select athletes from special schools/centers to participate in overseas competitions. These athletes are registered with us by completing the Athlete Registration Form.

In addition, we also organize our own ongoing training programs in certain sports to cater to those who are not in any sports program in the special schools/centers or have left the schools/centers.

### **What has worked?**

The response to our offer to participate in our training programs and competitions is good because of our close rapport with the special schools/centers. Schools entering their athletes for local competitions organized by Special Olympics Singapore have to provide particulars of all their participants. At the end of each year, schools/centers are requested to submit particulars of their athletes who were trained but did not participate in any local or overseas competition.

The athletes' particulars provided under items 2-4 above are then keyed into a computerized database designed to provide athlete data similar to those required by Special Olympics' global census.

The only setback is that we do not have direct control over the training of athletes and their retention as the schools/centers have their own selection criteria for their students/clients to be trained in sports.

## **3. Special Olympics East Asia**

### **a. Chinese Taipei**

#### **Description:**

The strategy (development model) is based on the following steps:

- To establish cooperative relations with schools that have special classes for students with intellectual disabilities;
- To provide more chances and information for ordinary people — students, faculty and family members included — to better understand students with intellectual disabilities;
- To hold family forums for students' family members and to arrange for regular education students to participate in the SO Get Into It™ curriculum;
- To make use of school resources and facilities to hold Special Olympics sports training camps; and
- To make the schools become Special Olympics activities-based.

### **What has worked?**

By conducting these various activities in both schools and the community, we can recruit more family members and athletes at the same time.

#### **b. Hong Kong**

##### **Description:**

Recruitment of athletes through agency members serving populations with special needs such as special schools, day activity centers, hostels, etc.

- Education of the community via main stream schools and institutions
- Establishment of family network through which athletes can be assessed

### **What has worked?**

- The majority of our athletes are recruited through agency members. This strategy works properly.
- Education of the community also works but it takes a lot of labor and the penetration rate depends on how many schools and institutions we have time to visit.
- The family network is newly established and concrete work has not been started yet. At such an early stage, it is hard for us to give comment.
- If promotional tools such as an updated PowerPoint presentation, video presentation and other related audiovisual aids can be produced and provided by the Special Olympics East Asia Region for common use, it would save us much time in introducing Special Olympics to the public.

## **4. Special Olympics Europe/Eurasia**

### **a. Great Britain**

##### **Description:**

We conducted a campaign to approach schools to gain interest in our Program. If interest was expressed, we arranged to meet with the school and local Sports Development Officer and any other interested parties. The Program was introduced and we discussed the potential for the school to become a Special Olympics Group, as well as what resources are already available for the school/group, e.g. funding, transport, coaches, etc. Using the PDS tool, there was an athlete growth increase of 182 new athletes (+67%) throughout Great Britain using this initiative.

In terms of approaching school administrators, I have in the past utilized established networks to identify a school which has a proactive approach to sport for its pupils. An example of this may be identifying a school that has received a "Sportsmark Award", which is a nationally recognized achievement from Sport England, given to schools who have a very good program of general sports provision.

There is also the sports development officer link, which has proved very beneficial in identifying potential groups/schools. Overall, the main objective has been to establish and maintain a strong network of partnerships with other organizations/people, whose role is in some way connected to Learning Disability. We will also be using football week as an opportunity to involve schools, and I will follow up with meetings to



establish groups, from those taking part in football week. In terms of approach, I will usually explain what Special Olympics is in terms of competitive opportunities (which most schools lack). I will then explain membership and what is involved in the process of setting up a group. I will also usually try to identify what resources the school has, and what resources, etc. they would need to establish a group. This helps me to identify solutions to any potential problems they may face. Finally I will try to make sure that I have answered all questions as fully as possible.

These are the general things that I would cover, however no two schools/groups are the same, and often they each have differing problems with regard to setting up as a Special Olympics group, so I feel it is important to have a very open approach, which allows for flexibility at these meetings, which often means being well prepared in terms of finding out what is available in the locality e.g. are local Sports Development well resourced, does school have access to a track/pool/gym etc., or is there one nearby, are there any (local) funding opportunities, etc.?

Very often, when a sports development officer can make one of these meetings, they will usually have this information and it has been a pleasure on some occasions to hear the potential problems that a group feels they would have in setting up, to be immediately resolved by the Sports Development Officer.

### **What has worked?**

When a school/group has proper resources, and the sports development officer is quite active with regard to opportunities for people with learning disabilities, things work quite well. There are also a number of funding opportunities and government initiatives, which, if the school/group has a Special Olympics program, enhances these opportunities. I also believe that establishing partnerships is very important, whether to other sports organizations, disability organizations or voluntary organizations, etc., as they can be very useful in assisting with growth at a local level. However lack of resources, especially transport, are a major obstacle to joining Special Olympics here in Great Britain, as is teacher/volunteer time.

An example of where this partnership is working well is a school which was interested in becoming a Special Olympics group. I met with the school and the sports officer and I have now met with a local business, which expressed an interest in helping a community project where they are based. The business is providing initial funding and volunteers. The sports officer is providing coaching for the athletes and training for the teacher and parents are being sought to assist with the committee and we are all working on potential funding sources. The business is also providing administration assistance and although committee members are also provided. The aim is to hand over control to volunteers/parents in the near future.

### **b. Serbia and Montenegro**

#### **Description:**

The aim of the strategy was to reach children and youth with special needs in schools and institutions. The attention we received helped us to get in touch with families.

#### **What has worked?**

Cooperation with families proved to be less than anticipated but satisfactory progress has been made (1,300 athletes). Greater public and state support would have been helpful. Along with more public awareness activities, more could have been done.

## **5. Special Olympics Middle East/North Africa**

### **a. Bharat**

#### **Description:**

The Focus was more on the institutions working with people with intellectual disabilities (i.e. special schools, rehabilitation centers, residential institutions, etc.). There are over 2,000 Institutions working in this field. The objective was to reach out to these institutions first.

#### **What has worked?**

As a result, 17,000 athletes have been recruited between 2000 and 2003. Reaching out to the Institutions was not difficult, as the Sub-Programs have developed a network with the institutions. However reaching out to the rural areas is still a big challenge. We need to provide resources for volunteers to commute to remote areas. More awareness and visibility of Special Olympics would help us reach more athletes as well.

## **LEADERSHIP RECRUITMENT AND DEVELOPMENT**

The strength of the Special Olympics movement is affected by the strength of its leadership at all levels. Two key areas of leadership that drive Program growth are Program and Athlete leaders.

The quality of Program leadership, both within Boards of Directors and among National Directors, is a major factor in creating a growing, stable Special Olympics Program. Leaders who embrace a vision of growth and a commitment to overcome the obstacles are the single most important factor. One or more of the following attributes characterizes highly rated leaders:

- Access to opinion leaders in government;
- Capacity to generate significant public awareness;
- Successful fundraising or donor development;
- Demonstrated success in business, education, health, government or sport; and/or
- Commitment to the athletes and the vision of the movement.

Examples include:

- The growth of Special Olympics South Africa has occurred only recently. Following a period of Program stagnation, in 2001 Special Olympics initiated the African Hope project. Through a series of high-profile awareness-raising events, Special Olympics fostered a relationship with former South African President Nelson Mandela. Mandela's influence has assisted in the identification of new Board members and a new vision for the Program, which will hopefully result in significant growth in the coming year.
- Special Olympics staff has worked closely with the Special Olympics Mexico Board of Directors to develop and implement a growth plan for the Program in Mexico City. Part of this plan included development and expansion of the Board to include several high-level community and business leaders. The composition of the Board includes national and foreign-national business leaders, sports personalities and successful philanthropists. These individuals have contributed to the recent success of local fundraising and awareness-building efforts.



Since formalizing the ALPs initiative in 1997, Special Olympics has approached athlete leadership development through seminars, primarily driven at the regional level. While more work is needed to measure the growth impact of this initiative, it serves an important public awareness role by highlighting the competence-based values of the Special Olympics movement and by positioning the Special Olympics movement as a leader in the self-advocacy world. ALPs efforts may also serve as a retention tool by broadening the Special Olympics experience and providing opportunities for athletes to continue their involvement even if they no longer compete.

- In Europe/Eurasia, staff cited the World Games as a major opportunity to turn the 1,000 or so participating athletes into ALPs spokespeople/messengers.
- Latin America has established a Regional Athlete Advisory Council with the mission of recruiting and placing athletes in key leadership roles at all Program levels. Latin America expects an exponential increase of the ALPs initiative in the next two years.

Clearly, leadership plays a crucial role in Program growth and the movement's visibility in the community. Given the importance of leadership at the Program level, Special Olympics is developing tools to improve recruitment of quality Program leaders through assessment and leadership development. Greater adoption of ALPs initiative is also needed to uphold Special Olympics' commitment to being a worldwide movement led by athletes.

## 1. Special Olympics Africa

### a. Tanzania

#### Description:

As most of the coaches are teachers they make sure that each student participates in the program. These teachers go to the community to sensitize children with mental disabilities to join school and automatically join the program. Of course, most of the children are ready to join school because of the opportunity to play, and they don't quit because there is fun in the sport. As a result, more schools are opened or more classrooms are built by the Government. We therefore retain them but also the teachers sensitize the out of school people with intellectual disability to stay with the program, which they agree because of the fun they have. So far, 1,500 athletes have stayed with us.

#### What has worked?

All worked. Using schools and vocational training colleges as places to have the athlete stay together works well. We could do better by providing more events and motivation to athletes, coaches, family members and volunteers. This could be in the form of monetary incentives to meet travel, meals, etc. costs that they normally incur to attend any Special Olympics function.

## 2. Special Olympics East Asia

### a. Hong Kong

#### Description:

We have recruited specific volunteers - "Special Olympics Ambassadors" to help us perform liaison work to help Athletes. They also keep regular contact with those inactive members by inviting them to come to join our activities.

Balancing the athletic training, we offer recreational activities such as hiking, visit to museums and parks and fitness day that are organized on a seasonal basis for registered athletes. This gives athletes opportunities to meet new friends after school life and to assist them to enhance their social skills so that they can unify into the community through normal social life. So far, 196 athletes have been retained.

### **What has worked?**

Regular activities can keep those athletes to maintain active lifestyles after school or skill-center life. Limitation is that some athletes do not know how to get to the activity meeting points which greatly limits their active participation. We plan to organize workshops and interest groups in the future to teach athletes basic knowledge on computer and internet access. We will also organize more training workshops that would help them to find a job and be better equipped for daily life.

### **b. Macau**

#### **Description:**

Last year we tried to develop our Special Olympics membership, so we began this pilot program. During the summer holiday, we hired some part time coaches and social workers in order to go to the welfare center and special education unit to promote the spirit of Special Olympics. The athlete's ages are about 6-8. Targets include the staff and athlete's family. This provided them with an understanding about the purpose of Special Olympics.

### **What has worked?**

The program could help the families, athletes and professionals pay more attention about Special Olympics. They will be more accepting of Special Olympics when the athletes have grown up. Most of them wanted long-term programs which could give the directly services.

The program is a pilot program. It proved the program can help Special Olympics increase the membership. The program has used the social work method to promote the mission of Special Olympics. It continued for at least 3 months. The program has some successes inviting the athlete's family members to get involved. All the workers of the program must be well trained in terms of how to lead the family to get involved.

### **3. Special Olympics Latin America (Responses are for the Region as a whole and not Program specific)**

**Description:** – 80% of Programs report family participation with 40% having a Family Support Network (FSN). Activities offered to families include:

- Support in tournaments
- Recreational, social activities
- Conferences, lectures
- Fund raising events
- Mother's Day at Special Olympics
- Parties for athletes and families
- Annual Family Day camp



Special Olympics events, these family services are offered:

- Welcome committee
- Registration of new families
- Meetings and conferences for families
- Special place/seating for families
- Special recognition, for families

Recommendations for enhancing family involvement include:

- Recruitment of new families still has a high concentration in schools but FSN is gaining a better position.
- Regional Office has offered FSN seed grants to implement FSN and those Programs awarded these grant have shown better growth numbers. Work that is more educational needs to be done with the rest of the Programs.
- There is a close relation between family's interest and athlete's participation, especially of those who are not attending at any school system. Working with those families shows good results in athlete's recruitment and retention.

It is recommended that we involve more families in Outreach and Public Awareness strategies because they are excellent advocates for the Program.

#### **4. Special Olympics Middle East North Africa**

##### **a. Bahrain**

###### **Description:**

Family education and school principal lectures are conducted frequently to explain Bahrain's plans for the coming year. These sessions are conducted by trained volunteers along with Special Olympics Bahrain staff. On-going awareness and communication is essential, but easy in a country the size of Bahrain.

#### **5. Special Olympics North America**

##### **a. Georgia**

###### **Description:**

We found that we were a school-based Program with less than 23% of our athlete base over age 21. We trained a group of adult athletes who served as our recruiters going in to workshops, group homes and other potential adult settings to share their stories.

###### **What has/has not worked?**

The adult athletes served as key role models and spokespeople in dispelling many myths held by administrators and potential athletes. Our original target number doubled in the first year.

## **DIRECT INVESTMENT COUPLED WITH FOCUSED STAFF SUPPORT**

Special Olympics provides targeted, direct investment to Special Olympics Programs through a range of funding vehicles, particularly grants and loans. The Christmas Records Grants (CRG) program, while not the only strategy, is the largest and most well established of the grant mechanisms. To support Program growth, CRG are provided directly to Programs, not to individuals, to strengthen key components of Program development: board development, sport training, public awareness, fundraising and competition efforts. The projects range from a single training event with follow-up to long-term development projects of up to 3 years or more. With long-term, large investments, Special Olympics also uses dedicated staff for consultation and hands-on support.

- Beginning in 2001, Special Olympics awarded a US\$100,000 per year CRG grant to Special Olympics Mexico coupled with dedicate support from North America regional staff. Special Olympics assisted Special Olympics Mexico in defining a realistic strategy to generate significant growth focused in Mexico City. The partnership between Special Olympics Mexico Board Members and Special Olympics staff, as well as the ability of Special Olympics to dedicate staff and resources on an ongoing basis, has resulted in 4,542 new athletes or 127% growth primarily in Mexico City over the past two years. As mutually agreed-upon benchmarks are achieved, the project will expand outside of Mexico City and regional staff and outside funding will be gradually withdrawn.
- In 1998, Special Olympics Egypt was awarded a four year CRG for Development, Growth and Outreach. At the time, Special Olympics Egypt had barely recruited 2,000 athletes. By year 2000, before the Grant duration was over, Special Olympics Egypt's status had dramatically changed. Now considered one of the most powerful programs in the region, Special Olympics Egypt did not require the fourth grant installment. As a result of their combined efforts, an additional 14,212 athletes were recruited, 83 additional schools and associations joined, and 1,944 additional coaches became involved.

While there is widespread agreement that cash investment alone in Programs contributes to growth, the result of these investments is mixed. The resources that provide these investments are limited, so it is imperative that every investment make a difference. Requirements for maximizing the "return on investment" include having strong, committed leadership at the Program level, defining clear growth plans and targets for the investments and applying subject matter experts and dedicated staff to support the state or country.

For additional information about the Christmas Record Grant program, please contact your Program's National Director, State Director or Regional Managing Director.

### **1. Asia Pacific**

#### **a. Bangladesh**

##### **Description:**

Our method was to develop a close, friendly relationship with the special institutions who are engaged with education and rehabilitation for the intellectually disabled. These institutions were provided financial assistance through the Special Olympics Christmas Record Grant strategy for identifying the intellectually disabled persons. Funds were used to expand existing Special Olympics activities, training their capable teachers as coaches and involving parents.



### What has worked?

Once additional coaches training occurred, we developed Divisional Quarterly Games. As a result, athlete recruitment increased from 1,125 in 2002 to 1,775 in 2003 for an increase of 58%.

### HIGH-PROFILE, AWARENESS-RAISING EVENTS

Special Olympics has 35 years of experience in building awareness through special events, celebrity spokespersons, and public relations campaigns largely in the United States. In recent years, these event marketing effort have been expanded internationally.

- Special Olympics' flagship event, the World Games, will be held outside the United States and in three different regions by 2007.
- Arnold Schwarzenegger led the China Millennium March and along with Nelson Mandela led the African Hope campaigns that are examples of how Special Olympics leveraged celebrities and high-profile leadership internationally.
- The Procter and Gamble relationship expanded by customizing its traditional U.S.-based cause marketing campaign to Puerto Rico.
- The Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics is one of the movement's most successful public relations and fundraising events, conducted annually in every U.S. state and now in over 30 countries.
- Most regions have added public relations managers and enhanced their ability to provide fundraising and marketing training to Programs.

## 1. Special Olympics North America

### a. Iowa

#### Description:

A staff member travels the state in order to meet with school officials and facility officials who are not yet participating in Special Olympics. We are able to determine the reasons for non-participation and try to resolve their issues. We have a scholarship fund to provide grants to coaches and facilities to get new athletes involved as well as keep those that are having financial problems.

### What has worked?

It has worked because finances are a real problem with many of our schools. If we had more funding to assist, it would make our successes even greater. We have data that shows it increased our athlete count by 15%.

### b. Louisiana

#### Description:

Community-based sports league; Parks and Recreation in one of our Areas hired a Special Olympics Program Administrator. This person oversees the promotion and administration of seasonal sport leagues through the Park offerings.

**What has/has not worked?**

We believe it worked but have no data to date to support our conclusions. We know it has enhanced relationships between schools and Parks. Facilities are now dedicated to both competition and training. Special Olympics offerings are listed in the with other Park activities.



## Appendix A

### USE OF MARKETING TECHNIQUES TO RECRUIT MORE ATHLETES

Marketing is important to raise awareness and interest in your Program. Often people do not desire to be involved in something until they know it exists and need to know how to take action in order to get involved. It is your responsibility to raise awareness and interest in your program, create a desire to get involved and take action in the program.

There are many techniques to market your program and often going to your very own rolodex of contacts is the first place to get the best ideas. However, here are some low-budget easy ways to market your program. Assuming you do not have the resources to take out a full-page advertisement in the local paper, we suggest you combine with existing resources in the community such as those listed below. In every marketing outreach effort be sure to include a person's contact information, a phone number and a specific activity where people know how to get involved and make a difference.

If you are interested in gaining additional marketing and fundraising expertise, please contact your Program or Regional office to find out how you can obtain the Special Olympics Fundraising Guide or the Special Olympics Public Relations Guide.

- See what your local radio station or cable station do in terms of promoting community service needs and activities for free. Consider asking them to become a media sponsor in return for recognition benefits.
- Write an article or announcement in your local government/municipal/community park or recreation newsletter, bulletin board, e-mail distribution list.
- Write article or announcement in local coaches' newsletters or sport athletic papers.
- Ask your local government officials (head of school board, head of community park or recreation department, local assembly member, town/village leader or mayor) how to work together to help promote your program.
- Get on the agenda of the local coaches meetings (public and private schools, track and field, football [soccer], tennis) and make an announcement about the needs of your program.
- Get on the agenda of the local sports association chapter meetings (track and field, soccer, tennis association) and make an announcement about the needs of your program. See if they have upcoming invitational events, meets, tournaments where you could set up a booth or table.
- Reach out to the local YMCA or sports clubs and find out what meetings, newsletters or bulletin boards your Program can have regular access to in order to promote your program.
- Reach out to local group homes and ask if you could make a presentation, place an announcement in their newsletters or place a flyer on their bulletin boards to promote your program.
- Reach out to the local schools or Parent/Teacher association and find out what school assemblies, community service days, E-mail distribution lists or bulletin boards exist so that you can promote your program through them.

- Find out what community festivals, concerts, fairs or parades exist where you could set up a booth, make a presence and promote your program.
- Reach out to the local sports shops and find out if they have their own bulletin board, list serve or newsletter where you could promote your program.
- Reach out to local houses of worship and ask if you could place an announcement in their newsletters, bulletin boards, or attend their volunteer/outreach meetings etc.
- Reach out to local civic clubs such as the Lions, Kiwanis, Rotary and ask if you could place an announcement in their newsletters, bulletin boards, or attend their volunteer/outreach meetings etc.



## APPENDIX B

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**APPENDIX C**

**Survey to submit your athlete recruitment ideas for possible inclusion in Version 2 of “Athlete Recruitment: Shared Practices for Recruiting Special Olympics Athletes” for publication in late 2004**



**Athlete Recruitment: Shared Practices for Recruiting Special Olympics Athletes**

**Program Staff:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Program Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Special Olympics is continuing work in developing a variety of Global Athlete Recruitment and Retention resources in order to help us reach one million more athletes by 2005. Your Program may contribute to a future edition of “Athlete Recruitment: Shared Practices for Recruiting Special Olympics Athletes” by completing the following survey and sending it to your Regional Organizational Development staff by 30 September 2004.

**I. ATHLETE RECRUITMENT STRATEGY-** Did it have a name? If so, what was it called?

A. What target population was **recruited** by the strategy? Check all that apply.

<input type="checkbox"/> Children in school ages 8-10
<input type="checkbox"/> Children in school ages 11 to 13
<input type="checkbox"/> Children in school ages 14 to 18 or older
<input type="checkbox"/> Tracking children as they left school and went into the community
<input type="checkbox"/> Families as the primary caregiver for the athletes
<input type="checkbox"/> Community-based sports leagues or organizations
<input type="checkbox"/> Athletes ages 21 and older
<input type="checkbox"/> Residential institutions
<input type="checkbox"/> Creation or expansion of Unified Sports™ Teams
<input type="checkbox"/> Other not mentioned above

B. Please describe the athlete recruitment strategy briefly:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



C. What worked?

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D. What did not work?

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E. What would make this strategy better and increase the chances of other Program staff/volunteers using it?

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F. How many new athletes did you recruit as a result of this strategy?

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G. Overall, what do you think are the most positive features, or aspects, of the strategy?

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H. What do you think could be done to make the strategy more attractive or useful?

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**Please return this survey by fax or E-mail to your Regional Organizational Development staff listed in APPENDIX C by 30 September 2004.**

Thank you for participating in the athlete recruitment and retention survey. Your time and contributions are a very valuable part of this process.



**Special Olympics**

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