Special Olympics Fact Sheet

Special Olympics: Special Olympics is an international organization that changes lives by promoting understanding, acceptance and inclusion between people with and without intellectual disabilities. Founded in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Special Olympics provides people with intellectual disabilities continuing opportunities to realize their potential, develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, and experience joy and friendship.

Through year-round sports training and athletic competition and other related programming for nearly two million children and adults with intellectual disabilities in 150 countries, Special Olympics has created a model community that celebrates people's diverse gifts.

There is no cost to participate in 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.

Oath: Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.

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.

Board of Directors: A board of directors determines international policies and is comprised of political, business and sports leaders from around the world, including Chairman of the Board Timothy P. Shriver, Peter Lynch, Nadia Comaneci, Vanessa Williams and Scott Hamilton.
Initiatives: Over the past decade, Special Olympics has become a leader in the area of intellectual disabilities with initiatives in education, health care, family support, and research. The organization has provided a free service learning curriculum to schools around the world for youth to learn about and accept people with intellectual disabilities, as well as take action to make a change in their own communities. Special Olympics’ “Healthy Athletes” has brought health disparities for people with intellectual disabilities to the forefront, as well as brought attention to the negative and destructive attitudes toward people with intellectual disabilities.

Special Olympics is changing attitudes and changing lives not only in the United States, but in places like Afghanistan, China, India, Iraq, South Africa and Russia. Not only are the lives of the athletes changed, but everyone who comes in contact with the organization experiences a life-transformation.


National Games Contact: John Shors, GroundFloor Media
303.885.3885
jshors@groundfloormedia.com

Press Contact: Kirsten Suto Seckler, Special Olympics
202.175.1147
kseckler@specialolympics.org