



Healthy Hearing is changing lives in communities across the globe by providing free hearing screenings and other medical services, including ear wax removal, swim molds, hearing aid maintenance and minor repairs for people with intellectual disabilities. **The amount of ear problems and hearing loss among Special Olympics athletes is greater than that found in the general population.** Most athletes' hearing problems are previously undetected, unserved or under-treated. Hearing loss negatively impacts communication ability, quality of life, social interactions and health.

Importance and Impact

Healthy Hearing screenings have found that a large percentage of Special Olympics athletes have untreated ear and hearing conditions.

- **40%** have blocked or partially blocked ear canals
- **26%** failed Puretone hearing screenings
- **7%** have bilateral sensorineural hearing loss
- **89,471 screenings** performed in 65 countries since 15 September 2016.

Purpose of the Screening:

- Increase access to hearing care for Special Olympics athletes, as well as all individuals with intellectual disabilities.
- Identify permanent hearing loss and provide referral for follow-up care.
- Identify medical issues causing hearing loss and refer to the appropriate medical professional for follow-up.
- Raise audiologists' awareness of the hearing concerns of people with special needs, including the difficulties involved in diagnosing and accessing treatment options.
- Provide educational and clinical opportunities for students training in the field of Speech Language Pathology and Audiology.
- Provide a list of regional audiologists and ear, nose and throat specialists who care for people with special needs to all athletes who participate in the Special Olympics Healthy Hearing program.
- Develop a body of knowledge about ear canal hygiene of children and adults with special needs.
- Educate athletes about ways to prevent hearing loss from noise exposure.

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