



**TO:** Special Olympics - All Staff  
**FROM:** Kirsten Suto Seckler, VP Branding and Communications, SOI  
**DATE:** 13 May 2011  
**SUBJECT:** 2011 Special Olympics Talking Points

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We have just concluded our 2010 Special Olympics Census which provides us with new global growth numbers and statistics. Please use the following top-line numbers and talking points in your communications efforts. The full Reach Report with the complete census results will be available in the coming weeks,

To ensure consistency throughout the world, we ask that you use these numbers and talking points when promoting the Movement. Having a consistent global voice when sharing information will only strengthen our brand around the world. We appreciate your cooperation.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at any time at 1-202-715-1147 or by e-mail at [kseckler@specialolympics.org](mailto:kseckler@specialolympics.org).

#### **OVERVIEW:**

Over the past 43 years Special Olympics has grown from a modest program serving local athletes to become the **world's largest movement dedicated to promoting respect, acceptance, inclusion and human dignity** for people with intellectual disabilities through sports.

- With sports at the core, Special Olympics has grown to be a movement that is not just about the largest disability population in the world, but about all of us. Sports is a universal language which unites people on and off the field of play, cutting across lines of race, ethnicity, education level, social status and economic background.
- Special Olympics currently serves **more than 3.7 million athletes** in **229 Accredited Special Olympics Programs** across more than **170 countries** worldwide with **7 regional offices** around the world, located in China, Egypt, Ireland, Panama, Singapore, South Africa and the United States.
- Special Olympics offers **32 Olympic-type summer and winter sports** (28 Official sports and 4 Recognized sports) and holds **nearly 50,000 competitions annually (49,778 to be exact)**. That's the equivalent of about **136 competitions a day**, a 10 percent increase from the previous year.
- More than **847,000 volunteers** and more than **275,000 coaches** supported Special Olympics athletes globally during 2010.
- If you are a fan of sports that create unity, athletes who inspire, and connections that foster acceptance, then you are already a fan of Special Olympics.
- We are asking the world to support our athletes and engage with Special Olympics. **This year we want to reach 3.7 million fans or "likes" on Facebook – one fan for every athlete worldwide.** Like us today at [fb.com/specialolympics](http://fb.com/specialolympics).



## GROWTH:

- During 2010, Special Olympics continued to grow steadily and expand global reach at an annual rate of 9.2 percent. In the past year, **we added 315,000 new athletes** throughout the world.
- In addition, key **demographics** to note: approximately 66 percent of our Special Olympics athletes are of school age (8-21) and over 33 percent are adults (22+). Special Olympics also serves more than 52,000 individuals in the 2-7 age group. Female athletes account for 36 percent of our total Special Olympics athlete population worldwide.
- Guided by the Movement's Mission Statement, Special Olympics is determined to offer sports training and competition opportunities to all interested individuals with intellectual disabilities. Over the years, while we have significantly expanded our geographic scope of work and reached millions of new athletes, Special Olympics **still serves less than 2 percent of the world's population of people with intellectual disabilities**. People with intellectual disabilities are every **society's most neglected population**. Nearly 200 million people have an intellectual disability (ID), making it the largest disability population in the world.

## IMPACT:

- Special Olympics provides a catalyst for **social change and building communities**. Special Olympics believes in creating more unified communities around the world -- places where each person, regardless of ability or disability, is accepted and welcomed, and where every individual contributes to the strength and vibrancy of the whole.
- Special Olympics is **empowering athletes** with intellectual disabilities to be leaders in society by providing them with opportunities to learn skills that transcend the playing field. Our athletes hold jobs, go to school, and are active members of their communities.
- Nearly 70 percent of persons with intellectual disabilities have the capacity to function at much higher levels than society's perceptions allow or encourage (Multinational Study of Attitudes toward Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities, Special Olympics, 2003). Special Olympics offers athletes the chance to meet the highest possible expectations – and surpass them.
- With more than **3.7 million athletes** participating worldwide, Special Olympics has created the world's largest sports community for people with intellectual disabilities, helping to improve the health, self-esteem and self-confidence of all who participate.
- Special Olympics is the world's largest public health organization for people with intellectual disabilities, providing access to free health services for a population with many unmet needs. For many athletes in the developing world, Special Olympics Healthy Athletes® screenings could be the first time they've ever even seen a doctor. In 2010 we screened our millionth athlete.
- By garnering the support of political leaders across the globe, Special Olympics has influenced policies that have resulted in better health, education and employment opportunities for individuals with special needs.
- Special Olympics educational programming leverages sports as a platform for teaching acceptance and inclusion to young people around the world. Young people are now leading the charge to banish



hateful speech and prejudices against people with intellectual disabilities.

## SPORTS:

- Special Olympics continues to sharpen its focus on delivering year-round competition opportunities in a variety of sports. In 2010, Special Olympics offered athletes 5,000 more competitions than the previous year and **increased the overall number of competitions to 49,778** – equal to **136 competitions on** average being staged every day around the world. Special Olympics' most popular sports include athletics, football (soccer), basketball, bowling, aquatics and bocce.
- Unified Sports® continues to grow worldwide to nearly half a million participants. In 2010, we saw a **53 percent growth rate** with **192,740 Unified Sports athletes** and **302,954 partners** engaged in Unified Sports opportunities. Unified Sports place Special Olympics athletes on the same field as partners without intellectual disabilities on the same playing field. Special Olympics plans to increase Unified Sports 25 percent by 2015.

## HEALTH & PUBLIC POLICY:

- Data collected through Special Olympics Healthy Athletes screenings can often be the only source of health information on people with intellectual disabilities. Senior Special Olympics staff and consultants at the international, regional and local levels advise policy makers, testify in hearings, and present scientific and educational materials documenting the health needs of this population. Special Olympics has also signed Memoranda of Understanding with national governments, brought about improvements in national healthcare policy, and secured local government funding for its health programs.
- Special Olympics continues to push for passage of the Eunice Kennedy Shriver Act, a renewal of the 2004 Sport and Empowerment Act which authorized five years of funding for Special Olympics health, education and other initiatives. In 2010, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the legislation, but it was stalled in the Senate. The new bill also included authorization for grants for Best Buddies International and the establishment of the Eunice Kennedy Shriver Institutes for Sport and Social Impact.
- Special Olympics secured new Government funding for Healthy Athletes in the East Asia Region, including full support of Healthy Athletes at the 2010 China National Games. After her visit to the 2007 World Games in Shanghai, China, Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo ordered the transfer of the National Council for the Welfare of Disabled Persons (NCWDP) from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to the Office of the President to further strengthen the government programs for the welfare of persons with disabilities.
- In Belgium, clinical data from Special Olympics Special Smiles athlete screenings in 2003 and 2004 were used to convince politicians to change the dental reimbursement for preventive measures for people with disabilities. Beginning in February 2005, people with intellectual disabilities have been reimbursed for up to four visits to the dentist each year instead of just one, in recognition of the significant oral health problems in this population.
- Health screenings have revealed that people with ID face huge health disparities, often due to the lack of medical professionals willing to serve a person with ID. Inexcusably, 39 percent have obvious untreated tooth decay; 28.7 percent have missing teeth; 55.4 percent have gait abnormalities; 25.9 percent fail hearing tests; 19.6 percent have low bone density; and 16.4 percent have eye disease.



People with intellectual disability have 40 percent greater risk of preventable secondary health conditions than the general population.

#### **FAMILIES:**

- **Helping families connect:** Communities of families have expanded their involvement in Special Olympics by coming together and organizing a Family Support Network. Special Olympics has established over 100 Family Support Networks globally to provide a welcome resource, develop community partner relationships and register thousands of new family members for local programs.

#### **YOUTH:**

- **Curriculum for change:** Get Into It® (K-12), an online curriculum, educates youth about intellectual disabilities while creating positive attitudes of inclusion, value and respect. SO Get Into also encourages students without disabilities to participate in Special Olympics, bringing together young people who otherwise might not have the opportunity to meet and to learn from one another.
- Children and young people are one of the most open-minded audiences for social change. Using sports as its platform, **Project UNIFY®** is a dynamic collaboration between Special Olympics and school communities that engages young people with and without intellectual disabilities to promote attitudes and behaviors of acceptance and inclusion in schools. Project UNIFY builds and strengthens partnerships between local Special Olympics Programs and participating schools to create “Project UNIFY Schools.” Through Project UNIFY, young people with and without intellectual disabilities are truly integrated, playing side-by-side on sports teams and coming together in dialogue to discuss topics such as reversing negative stereotypes.
- The “Spread the Word to End the Word®” Campaign is a grassroots effort to get people around the world, including the entertainment industry, to stop using the “R-word” (“retard” and comparable words in different cultures). The campaign targets students through school events and social networking, inviting them to sign an online pledge, and spread the word on their campuses. To date, nearly 250,000 people have taken the online pledge while millions have signed petitions, banners and taken oaths around the world to stop hurtful language and banish prejudices.

### **SPECIAL OLYMPICS SUPPORTERS**

#### **Corporate Supporters**

Corporate partners are essential in helping Special Olympics fulfill its mission. Through the generosity of cash, in-kind donations, volunteers and awareness, we are able to share the power of sport with the world. Our corporate team works with companies of all sizes with a solid history and strong brand image, including The Coca Cola Company, Procter & Gamble, Mattel, Hilton and Safeway.

#### **Government Supporters**

Special Olympics has excellent working relationships with governments and governmental agencies around the world. For example, Special Olympics is working with the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability to create more employment opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities. In Europe, the European Union is supporting the development of Special Olympics Programs across the 27 E.U. Member States.

#### **Community Supporters**

Special Olympics has deep relationships in the communities where it works. One of our most cherished partnerships is with 85,000 members of the law enforcement community who participate in grassroots fundraising and awareness events called the Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics®, which have raised nearly \$40 million for the Movement. Another important partnership is with the Lions Club,



which has raised \$10 million to provide prescription eyewear to more than 200,000 athletes around the world.

### **Individual Supporters**

Millions of people across the globe support Special Olympics through donations, volunteerism and advocacy. Whether a monthly pledge donor, a volunteer at a local competition, a teacher promoting tolerance and acceptance in the classroom, or a campus volunteer recruiting fellow students to end the derogatory use of the “R-word,” our individual supporters are vital members of the global movement. They have taken a stand for dignity, acceptance and the human race that ultimately creates a better world for us all.

### ***A Very Special Christmas***

Through bold innovation and enormous generosity, the record industry has made beautiful music benefiting Special Olympics since 1987. From its first release to the latest recording, the *A Very Special Christmas* record series has raised more than \$100 million in almost 25 years. Funds raised through the album sales and downloads are granted to catalyze growth of Special Olympics internationally (in places like Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Morocco, Egypt, Syria, Yemen, China, Brazil, Mexico, Russia, etc) as well as in hard-to-reach urban centers of the United States and the world.

## **SPECIAL OLYMPICS VALUES:**

### ***SPORTSMANSHIP WITH JOY***

We believe in the transformative power of sports. We embrace the purity of sports at all levels as we witness incredible personal athletic triumphs that shatter stereotypes.

### ***ATHLETE LEADERSHIP***

We empower athletes to be contributing and respected members of Special Olympics and society. We support athlete-leaders on and off the playing field.

### ***UNITY***

We are united in our commitment to inclusion, respect and dignity. We build communities of acceptance: loving families, inspired employees, coaches, volunteers and fans. We are one Movement, across every community and every country.

### ***BRAVERY***

We live our athlete oath: “Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.”

### ***PERSEVERANCE***

We are capable, tenacious and resilient. We don't give up on ourselves or each other.



**UPDATED BOILER PLATE:**

*Below is a standard paragraph or boilerplate about Special Olympics to be used when describing the movement. Typically, this paragraph is used in press releases.*

**About Special Olympics**

Special Olympics is an international organization that changes lives through the power of sport by encouraging and empowering people with intellectual disabilities, promoting acceptance for all, and fostering communities of understanding and respect worldwide. Founded in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, the Special Olympics movement has grown from a few hundred athletes to more than 3.7 million athletes in over 170 countries in all regions of the world, providing year-round sports training, athletic competition and other related programs. Special Olympics now takes place every day, changing the lives of people with intellectual disabilities in places like China and from regions like the Middle East to the community playgrounds and ball fields in every small neighborhood's backyard. Special Olympics provides people with intellectual disabilities continuing opportunities to realize their potential, develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, and experience joy and friendship. Visit Special Olympics at [www.specialolympics.org](http://www.specialolympics.org). Engage with us on: [Twitter @specialolympics](https://twitter.com/specialolympics); [fb.com/specialolympics](https://fb.com/specialolympics); [youtube.com/specialolympicshq](https://youtube.com/specialolympicshq), and [specialolympicsblog.wordpress.com](http://specialolympicsblog.wordpress.com).

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