



Essential Question

What are ways people can be good citizens?

Eunice Kennedy Shriver



by Geoff Fairburn

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Introduction

On July 20, 1968, a very special event took place in Chicago, Illinois in the United States. One thousand **athletes** from 26 states and Canada gathered for a sports event. There were around one hundred **spectators**. As the event began, a woman spoke to the athletes. She gave the athletes some words of wisdom. The words were, "Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt."



Eunice Kennedy Shriver (left) was the founder of Special Olympics.

"In ancient Rome, the gladiators went into the arena with these words on their lips: let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt. Today, all of you young athletes are in the arena. Many of you will win. But even more important, I know you will be brave and bring credit to your parents and to your country."

Eunice Kennedy Shriver (1968)

This was the opening of the very first Special Olympics Games. The one thousand athletes were all people with **intellectual disabilities**. Up to that time, people did not think they were able to take part in sports. But one woman knew what they could do. That woman was Eunice Kennedy Shriver. She had helped plan the games. She made the opening speech.

Eunice Kennedy Shriver felt that everyone mattered. She worked to improve the lives of people with intellectual disabilities.

Chapter 1 Growing Up

Eunice Kennedy Shriver was born in Brookline, Massachusetts in 1921. She was the fifth of nine children. Eunice's parents, Joseph and Rose, raised their children to love their family and to do their best. Eunice once said that her father's advice was to "win, win, win."

Eunice loved sports and was an excellent athlete. Her favorite sports were swimming and sailing. She played touch football with her brothers and always wanted to be the quarterback. All of Eunice's brothers and sisters would have fun and play sports, including her older sister Rosemary. Eunice loved to sail and win races with Rosemary.

Eunice (far right) loved to play football with her brothers.

CORBIS



Eunice (left) and her sister Rosemary (right) had a special relationship.

Rosemary Kennedy was born with mental challenges. She was slow to develop and learn. As she grew older, her family had trouble taking care of her at home. When Rosemary was in her twenties, she had a brain operation. Her family had hoped the operation would help her improve, but it did not work. Rosemary lived in a special home, but spent a lot of time with her family and loved to swim.

Bettmann/CORBIS

Chapter 2 A Life of Public Service

Eunice loved her sister Rosemary and was glad she grew up with her. Eunice said that if she had never met Rosemary she would not have known anything about children with intellectual disabilities. People with disabilities were often hidden away. Many were sent to **institutions**. They didn't have the chance to go to school or work. They were not encouraged to take part in community activities, make friends, or compete in athletic events.

Eunice Shriver felt the unfairness of this. She wanted to make life better for people like her sister Rosemary. So, she acted.

Today, children living with intellectual disabilities have the chance to go to schools, make friends, and play sports.

moodboard/the Agency Collection/Getty Images



Eunice thought that sports, exercise, and fun could make people's lives better.

In 1953, Eunice married Sargent Shriver, becoming Eunice Kennedy Shriver. Eunice and Sargent became the parents to five children, Robert, Maria, Timothy, Mark, and Anthony. While raising her family, Eunice still found time to help people living with intellectual disabilities.

For many years, Eunice ran the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation. This was a family **charity** set up in 1946. Under Eunice's leadership, the foundation studied the causes of intellectual disabilities. It looked for better ways to treat people facing such challenges.

Stringer/Getty Images



When her brother John F. Kennedy became President of the United States, Eunice asked for his help. She believed that the government should do more research into the causes of disabilities. She also felt that there needed to be more schools and training programs for people with intellectual disabilities. In 1963, President Kennedy signed a bill that helped meet these goals.



Eunice (right) was present when President Kennedy (left) signed a bill to help people with intellectual disabilities.

Bettmann/CORBIS

John Loengard/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images

One of the most important things that Eunice did was to talk and write about intellectual disabilities. In 1962, Eunice wrote an article for the *Saturday Evening Post*. She wrote about growing up with her sister Rosemary. She described how horrified she was by the way people with disabilities were treated.

Eunice also said that people with intellectual disabilities were able to do many things. With special education and training, they could be active members of the community.

At the time, people did not know much about intellectual disabilities. Eunice helped them understand.

THE KENNEDY BROTHERS

The Kennedy family was very involved in government. Eunice's brother John F. Kennedy became President of the United States in 1961. He was president until November 1963, when he was killed while visiting Dallas, Texas.

Robert F. Kennedy was U.S. Attorney General from 1961 to 1964. He ran for president in 1968. He was killed in June 1968. Edward Kennedy was U.S. Senator for Massachusetts for 47 years.



LEARNING FROM ROSEMARY

“Those of us who have seen children live in the shadows know that a country as rich as ours cannot possibly justify this neglect.”

*President John F. Kennedy
(1961)*

Chapter 3 From Camp Shriver to Special Olympics



Camp Shriver was started as a place where everyone could have fun and play sports.

In 1962, Eunice had a phone call from the mother of a child with an intellectual disability. The mother couldn't find a summer camp for her child. Eunice decided to help. She started a summer camp at her home in Maryland.

The camp was called Camp Shriver. It was free for children with intellectual disabilities. Other children were also welcomed. There were lots of fun and games. There were plenty of people to help out. Eunice and her children took part in the fun. She swam and played ball with the children. Camps like Camp Shriver were set up around the country.

The Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation funded hundreds of these camps around the United States. The success of these sports camps led Eunice Kennedy Shriver to start Special Olympics in 1968.

The first International Special Olympics Summer Games were held at Soldier Field in Chicago, Illinois, U.S. This was just a few weeks after Eunice's brother, Robert F. Kennedy, was killed while running for president.

Special Olympics



Special Olympics

THE FIRST SPECIAL OLYMPICS GAMES

One thousand athletes from 26 states and Canada competed in track and swimming. Swimming included 25-meter races, and track had short distance running, ball throws, and standing long jump.



Eunice loved sports and was a friend to all Special Olympics athletes.

Special Olympics

Today, people with intellectual disabilities are able to go to school, play sports, make friends, and get jobs. They were hidden away. Now they are celebrated for their **achievements**.

This change for the better began with the efforts of one woman, Eunice Kennedy Shriver. She spent her life working for and with people with intellectual disabilities. She did not waver. She was determined to improve their lives.

As Eunice opened the first Special Olympics Games, she believed in the athletes and hoped others would, too. Today, almost 4 million athletes participate in Special Olympics in over 170 countries. Once it was thought that they could not compete. Now they train and compete in sports and do their best to win. Special Olympics has millions of fans around the world.

Special Olympics helped to change people's minds about the **capabilities** of those who live with intellectual disabilities.

Special Olympics



More than 7,500 athletes participated in the 2007 Special Olympics World Summer Games in China. Eunice cheered on the athletes.

“By your presence, you send a message to every village, every city, every nation. A message of hope, a message of victory. The right to play on any playing field? You have earned it. The right to study in any school? You have earned it. The right to hold a job? You have earned it. The right to be anyone's neighbor? You have earned it.”

Eunice Kennedy Shriver (1987)



Like Nelson Mandela (left), Eunice Kennedy Shriver sent a message of hope to the world.

During her lifetime, Eunice was recognized for her many achievements and her good citizenship. She was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, America's highest civilian honor.

Eunice Kennedy Shriver died in August of 2009. Her work had changed the lives of people with intellectual disabilities. She had given them a chance to compete and to win.

TIME LINE

1921	Born
1943	Graduates from Stanford University
1951	Moves to Chicago; marries Sargent Shriver, May 1953
1957	Becomes director of the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation
1961	Brother John F. Kennedy becomes President of the United States
1962	First Camp Shriver held
1963	Intellectual Disabilities Bill signed, October 24 John F. Kennedy dies, November 22
1968	Robert F. Kennedy dies, June 6 First Special Olympics held, July 20
1984	Presidential Medal of Freedom awarded by President Ronald Reagan
2009	Dies August 11

Respond to Reading

Summarize

Summarize what the author thinks is important about Eunice Kennedy Shriver's life. Use the Point of View Chart to help you.

Details
↓
Point of View

Text Evidence

1. How do you know that *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* is a nonfiction text? What kind of nonfiction is it? How do you know? **GENRE**
2. What is the author's opinion of Eunice Kennedy Shriver? What words or phrases in the text tell you this? **AUTHOR'S POINT OF VIEW**
3. What does the word *encouraged* on page 6 mean? Use the root word to help you figure out the meaning. **PREFIXES AND SUFFIXES**
4. Write about the type of language the author uses to show you how he feels about Eunice Kennedy Shriver. **WRITE ABOUT READING**