

My personal experience at the Special Olympics Global Youth Activation Summit was a lot of fun! I had a wonderful time meeting a lot of Youth Leaders from around the world that attended the Global Youth Activation Summit. We all became really good friends and we all did a lot of fun stuff together like traveling to opening and closing ceremonies, sporting venues, trying new things, and learning about each others' cultures and what they have done with Project Unify in their own schools and communities.

Being a Panelist at The Global Development Summit was a great opportunity. I was able to talk about my experience with Project Unify and my experience as an Athlete. I was talking about my role model, Samantha Spoor, a good friend of mine and one of my swim teammates of the Newark high school swim team and how that she had changed my life forever. She once said to me, "Rachel! Just swim your best out there! Win or lose I will always support you!"

They picked me out of many Youth Leaders because of my accomplishments that I have been able to do, representing SODE (Special Olympics Delaware) in 2010 National Games in Nebraska and in the World Winter Games in China as a swimmer. It's important for young people to be there because *We are the leaders of Today!* We have the confidence in saying what we have to say, as youth leaders in helping people with and without ID making Project UNIFY fun, and how people get involved in it and why people got involved in it.

People want to become Youth leaders because they have either have a brother, sister or family member with an ID. They want to be involved as a leader, and help others. The importance for youth forums is for friendship, creating new ideas, realizing you are part of a global movement – Youth Summits are important to me and my friends, as global youth leaders because we are all coming together to create new ideas on how to help their school and the communities. "it gave me an amazing opportunity to become confident." And become a better leader and also be a mentor for others. After what I have been through, I've been able to help other youth leaders and people with ID make a difference.

The main calls to action for youth at the GYAS was "Spread the Word to End The Word" which is to stop using the R-word, "Retard." We want that word to go away, as it has harmful effects on people with and without Intellectual Disabilities and we do not want them to get hurt and we want people to understand.

Inclusion is important to me because it is all about people coming together, doing fun activities, projects and getting to know each other. Making new friendships. People with and without disabilities should be included as well because they are smart too. I know they can be different. They enjoy playing sports together with others; they want to share and engage in other activities!

How I felt about the differences in Leadership between the U.S. and different countries is when adults want to help young people develop leadership, but if they do all the talking and work for us, then that is not helping us! If adults did the presentations, with the youth just standing there, that wouldn't help the youth develop leadership. The youth leaders can speak as they have the courage to share and think about Special Olympics!

Project Unify has taught me how to become a more and better leader. It also taught me how to help others with Intellectual Disabilities. You have to be very supportive to them and cheer them on when participating in sports.

I love being a leader! When I was really young I was stage fright and I was scared to talk and meet new people. I wanted to do this to get rid of my stage fright and that I can be confident with myself. I love helping with others, my school and the community. I want to be helpful and want us to be part of this for the rest of my life. This is what I love doing!