

# R-Word Toolkit



## How To: Spread the Word to End the Word

*Created by: The National Youth Activation Committee*

**Purpose:** The purpose of the Special Olympics and Best Buddies initiative, Spread the Word to End the Word® (STWTETW), is to raise peoples' awareness of the derogatory use of the R-Word (retard or retarded) and its negative effects on people with intellectual disabilities, as well as their families and friends. However, this campaign is about more than just raising awareness of the R-word; it is also about changing attitudes of segregation and hate, to attitudes of acceptance and respect.

**Objective:** This manual is a guide for any individual interested in promoting this message of respect through an R-Word Campaign.

### Year One

**Expected Outcome:** Holding an R-Word Campaign in your area will **educate** those in your community about the R-Word, why it is important to eliminate it from everyday language, and how to spread the message to others. Make sure to work with your local Special Olympics program when making your plans! They will be able to offer lots of help.

#### First Year Ideas:

- **Small Rally** in a public place (i.e. Special Olympics state office, grocery store, local schools, etc.)
  - Be certain you have the appropriate permissions and details arranged before holding an event at any location.
  - > Some sites require a permit, which can be easily obtained with the help of Special Olympics office employees.
- Youth can give speeches throughout the designated time to talk about the STW-TETW campaign; speeches should touch on the impact of the r-word and the negative attitudes that are placed on people with disabilities.
- Check out our “How to Rally” for details on how to put one together!
- **Pledge stations** in public places (can have numerous stations set up all over town).
  - It is recommended to have a partner, an athlete, and Special Olympics staff member at every station.
  - You can have a big banner with a creative phrase such as, “I pledge to not use the hurtful word, “retard,” and to promote the inclusion of all people!”
  - Distribute information and answer questions about STWTETW and how/where they can sign the pledge ([www.r-word.org](http://www.r-word.org)).
    - > If Wi-Fi is available where you are, have a laptop where people can pledge online right then.
- **Have a meeting** with everyone who will be manning a station and provide them with talking points, discussion topics, and answers to frequently asked questions about the R-Word so that everyone is on the same page.

Here are some good things to include in this meeting:

- > Who started the campaign? What was their inspiration to do so?
- > When did this campaign start?
- > How successful has it been?
  - ◇ Keep updated on how many pledges are on [www.r-word.org](http://www.r-word.org).
- > What is the goal for the campaign?
- > How can people become involved?
- > The local Special Olympics office contact information
- Check with your state office to see if they have stickers, posters, and other related items to have at the station.
  - > If they do not, you can find them at the R-Word Merchandise store online at <http://www.r-wordstore.com/>
- **Youth leaders** (better in partner and athlete pairs) may give a **presentation** to local schools or youth focused organizations with information about the R-word and the STWTETW day.
  - If you decide to do this, keep it fun and interactive.
    - > Organize a speech, PowerPoint, and/or have an activity to talk about the campaign.
  - Points to include:
    - > Your life and how it has been affected by hearing the R- Word.
      - ◇ This is best given by an athlete because it is more powerful coming from them.
    - > Talk about what others have done for this campaign.
      - ◇ Show Public Service Announcements (PSAs) and other videos (See

the end of this document for links to awesome videos!)

- > How this is a youth led campaign?
- > The importance of continuing to spread this message.
- Give the school and/or organization a heads up on how long your presentation will be and what you require (projector, screen, seating, etc).
- This option often requires permission from the school and/or organization well in advance. STWTETW day is held the first Wednesday in March (while this is the national day, you can hold your event whenever you'd like throughout the year). Talk to the school and/or organization during fall semester about giving your presentation in March.
  - > After you obtain permission, keep in contact with the school and/or organization about the event.
  - > Communication is key to a successful event.

These are just a few ideas for events. Be creative and see what you can come up with your community; you have no limitations. This is a very powerful day and you can do amazing things!

#### **Tips:**

Keep the energy level high! You want people to see that Spread the Word to End the Word® is an informative, positive, and fun campaign to be involved in.

- **Stay positive and respectful:** As youth leaders, you want to show everyone that youth focus on positives and not negatives.
  - Example: Do not focus on how hurtful the R-Word is, instead focus on how much it

would mean to EVERYONE involved in Special Olympics if we found alternate words to use.

- **Let the athlete's voices be heard:** The most powerful voices regarding the R-Word are people with intellectual disabilities. Amaze the crowd with their ABILITIES and let them forget about their disabilities (another way to stay positive)!
  - **Make your message clear:** Refrain from using this time to promote other Special Olympics initiatives. This day is devoted to the awareness of the R-Word. But, if individuals request information about other Project UNIFY, Special Olympics, or Best Buddies programs, please provide information, flyers, or contacts in order to address their concerns appropriately.
  - **Advertise your event:** This does not mean you have to spend money to do so. Use things like homemade posters, social media (Facebook, Twitter), word of mouth, announcements at schools, and help from local businesses to get the word out about your event. The more people participating, the greater impact you will have. Call local news and radio stations to see if they would be willing to mention your event on air, free of cost.
- This ensures everyone is on the same page and understands the mission.
  - Developing a relationship with key people in your community and state is important to promote collaboration of activities (i.e., Governor, Special Olympics Presidents & CEOs, Law Enforcement Torch Run officers, etc.)
    - Collaboration will draw more attention to your event and greater participation.
    - These key people can come to your event and possibly speak.
    - As the event grows and becomes more known, you may be able to get a celebrity to speak. Work with your contacts to see if they have connections or resources to get a celebrity.
  - It is important to continue coming up with new and exciting ideas to promote your event.
    - If you do the same thing each year, your community may become desensitized to your cause.
  - If you feel that your program isn't quite ready for a big event just yet, feel free to stick with your year one plan until you are comfortable hosting a bigger event.
    - Remember that you always have your national YAC mentor to help you out!

## Continuing Years

Hopefully, a portion of your community now knows a little about STWTETW. Because of this, you won't have to focus as much on educating, but instead on **activating** and **motivating**! This year, consider holding a bigger event.

### Tips:

- All tips from year one still apply
- Each year your campaign will continue to grow in size, so it is important to provide a brief summary of STWTETW each year.

## Ideas for Bigger Events:

- Ideas for the first year still apply
- **Big Rally:** This idea is an exciting way to get the message out. Pick a central location that has enough room for many people (check if you need a permit for the location you choose).
  - Check out our "How to Rally" for details on how to put one together!

## Spread the Message via the Internet

- Due to the versatility, and convenience of the internet, this can be a great way to promote the STWTETW campaign.
  - Methods to promote the message electronically may include:
    - > Update your Facebook page to reflect how you feel about the R-word message through your status updates, profile pictures, and quotes.
    - > Write a blog about how the R-Word makes you feel and why we need to accept everyone for who they are.
    - > Develop a podcast to share about this movement.
    - > During the STWTETW month, send out a mass email (make sure to BCC each of the recipients to ensure privacy) about the campaign; the impact of the R-Word; but most importantly, why you want to be part of a youth-led movement for acceptance!
      - ◇ Try to keep the email short and sweet and provide a link to a video you love.
      - ◇ Also include the r-word site for them to pledge.
- Encourage others to check out these great websites:
  - > [www.r-word.org](http://www.r-word.org)
  - > [www.facebook.com/EndtheWord](http://www.facebook.com/EndtheWord)
  - > <http://www.youtube.com/endtherword>
  - > Check out these specific videos that we love!
    - ◇ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H1TbFUs7zZQ>
    - ◇ [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RfMlrTV\\_5vY&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RfMlrTV_5vY&feature=related)
    - ◇ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dM2TD6ErTcl&feature=related>
    - ◇ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zFKFshINuw&feature=related>
  - > Special Olympics provides a various resources like a toolkit with graphics and other related items on: <http://www.r-word.org/r-word-resources.aspx>
  - > After seeing these videos, try making your own PSA!