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SPECIAL OLYMPICS ARKANSAS LEADER BOBBY DOYLE

On Friday, November 14, 2014, the Special Olympics family lost one of its pioneers and most unique leaders, Bobby Doyle.

After forty years of service and leadership, Bobby Doyle, CEO of Special Olympics Arkansas retired in August of 2012.

As only the second CEO in history of Special Olympics Arkansas, Doyle was hero to Arkansas' citizens with intellectual disabilities, advocating for those most often disenfranchised from society. For forty years, Doyle worked to bring quality athletic competition and training to persons with intellectual disabilities in Arkansas through Special Olympics Arkansas programs.

After completing his undergraduate and graduate work at the University of Arkansas in the early 1960's, Doyle served as the Principal of John F. Kennedy High School in Grady Arkansas from 1961-1971.

1972 would prove a turning point in Doyle's life, as he began his personal mission to see to it that everyone had the chance to experience the joy and benefits of sports, including people with intellectual disabilities. He started his career with Special Olympics Arkansas as the Program Director and would soon be appointed to the position of Executive Director in 1975.

Doyle took Special Olympics Arkansas from providing two sports and serving 243 individuals in 1972, to a program that currently provides training and competition to nearly 14,578 athletes in 18 sports, on a year-round basis.

In 2011, Doyle was featured in the Legends symposium, moderated by Special Olympics CEO Tim Shriver, highlighting a handful of the leaders integral to the early development and growth of the Special Olympics movement.

"It has been a great ride," said Doyle at his 2012 retirement celebration. "There is always someone around wanting to serve the athletes participating in our program during a competition, training or just for fun. Everyone needs to realize one simple day of volunteering with Special Olympics athletes will change a life forever. Everyone that volunteers for Special Olympics, no matter the job or duty, is a member of a privileged family - the Special Olympics Arkansas family."

Brian Vandiver, the Special Olympics Arkansas Chairman of the Board at the time of Doyle's retirement, said "The Special Olympics Arkansas family owes Bobby a tremendous debt of gratitude for his vision and leadership in those early days and his strong hand at the helm ever since. He is a legend that is irreplaceable and the Special Olympics Arkansas family will always fondly think of him. But I am also very confident that, going forward, the staff and volunteers can and will continue to build on the strong foundation Bobby laid for us and we welcome that exciting challenge."