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# SPECIAL OLYMPICS ANNOUNCES GLOBAL YOUTH ACTIVATION SUMMIT TO BE HELD DURING UPCOMING WORLD WINTER GAMES

## *Event Empowers Youth to be Global Advocates of Acceptance for People with Intellectual Disabilities*

**WASHINGTON, D.C. – 12 December 2012** – Special Olympics proudly announces that 79 student teams from around the world will gather in the Republic of Korea this January for a [Global Youth Activation Summit \(GYAS\)](#).

This summit - to be held during Special Olympics 2013 World Winter Games in PyeongChang, Korea, from 29 January to 5 February, 2013 - will bring together young people who are committed to making a difference and promoting social inclusion through the power of sports in their schools and communities. The youth participants of the GYAS, aged 12-17, represent 22 countries and come from various educational levels, including middle (intermediate) school and high (secondary) school. These students will be paired together: one Special Olympics athlete with a peer partner, without an intellectual disability, from the same community, state or country.

During the summit, youth participants and invited guests will attend a variety of youth-led leadership training programs and interactive sports experiences, designed by youth to enhance their advocacy skills, share their knowledge and amplify their voices as active agents of change in promoting communities of inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities. Using an event theme of, "EDUCATE, MOTIVATE and ACTIVATE" the youth leaders will also act as journalists reporting on Special Olympics World Winter Games and publishing their stories, photos, blogs and posts daily on [Special Olympics website](#) and the [2013 Special Olympics World Winter Games](#) web sites and social networks.

### **Additional Global Youth Activation Summit Highlights:**

1. **Global Youth Rally:** Youth leaders will take center stage in this educational, motivational and activation- oriented event. Youth will address key issues alongside entertainers and Special Olympics athlete-leaders.
2. **Photo and Blogging session:** Youth will receive training from experienced peers and other media experts in the art of conducting interviews, taking photographs and then crafting Special Olympics messaging around compelling and inspirational stories of athletes, family members, volunteers and others. These stories and images will be shared via assorted social media and traditional media sources. Experiences serve as an example of how to continue this practice upon returning home to amplify youth's voices for change.
3. **School Enrichment Exchange:** Participants will spend time in activities with local Korean students who conducted a nation-wide School Enrichment Program over the previous nine months throughout schools in the Republic of Korea grades 1-12. Local students will plan activities that will demonstrate their involvement with Special Olympics.

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"We look to young people with and without intellectual disabilities to be our advocates and leaders of change in communities around the world," shared **Timothy Shriver, Special Olympics Chairman and CEO**. "Our youth leaders will bring to the Republic of Korea their unique experiences and insights about how Special Olympics can build communities of respect and inclusion for all and in return, they will bring home their work to influence real change with their peers and with key stakeholders throughout their communities, states and countries."

**Yoona Kim and Yang Hyun (Yanni) Cho, Global Youth Activation Summit (GYAS) Co-Chairs** from the Republic of Korea said how important the GYAS is: "We need to spread the message of respect and acceptance. The present is important, but the future is as well. Changing the views of youth is as important as anything else. We are caring, connected, and creative. There are no limits, which make youth such powerful agents of change."

The 2013 Special Olympics' Global Youth Activation Summit is the seventh such event to take place. The inaugural global youth summit was held in 2001 at the Special Olympics World Summer Games in Alaska. Since 2001 there have also been nearly 50 youth summits at national, regional and global levels, which have included representatives from nearly 150 Special Olympics Accredited Programs and 2,700 young leaders.

The Global Youth Activation Summit is one of several Special Olympics initiatives reaching more than 4 million young people with and without intellectual disabilities in all regions of the world.

The summit is made possible through an award from the **U.S. Department of Education** and a generous donation from the **Mattel Children's Foundation**.

To learn more about the 2013 Special Olympics Global Youth Summit, Special Olympics and other ways young leaders can get involved, visit [www.specialolympics.org/globalyouthsummit.aspx](http://www.specialolympics.org/globalyouthsummit.aspx).

From 29 January to 5 February 2013, the Republic of Korea will welcome more than 2,300 Special Olympics athletes from more than 110 nations to compete in seven Olympic-type winter sports as part of the Special Olympics World Winter Games. For information about the upcoming 2013 Special Olympics World Winter Games, visit the Games' official website at <http://www.2013sopoc.org/hb/en>

### **About Special Olympics**

Special Olympics is an international organization that changes lives 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 4 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 all countries of the world 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; facebook.com/specialolympics; youtube.com/specialolympicshq, and <http://specialolympicsblog.wordpress.com/>

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