*Contact:*

*XXX*

*Special Olympics XX*

*+1 (202) XXX*

*@specialolympics.org*

**SPECIAL OLYMPICS GLOBAL YOUTH ACTIVATION SUMMIT TO BE HELD DURING SPECIAL OLYMPICS WORLD SUMMER GAMES ATHENS 2011**

***Event empowers youth to be the global leaders of acceptance and understanding
for people with intellectual disabilities***

**WASHINGTON, D.C. – 14 April 2011** **–** Special Olympics is proud to announce, in conjunction with this weekend’s Global Youth Service Day, that Special Olympics will bring together 66 student teams from around the world to Greece for a Global Youth Activation Summit (GYAS). The summit, to be held during [Special Olympics World Summer Games Athens 2011](http://www.athens2011.org/en), from 25 June to 4 July, will foster young people who are committed to making a difference and build acceptance in their schools and communities. The youth participants of the GYAS, aged 12-17, represent 30 countries from Special Olympics’ seven global regions. Embracing the spirit of acceptance and inclusion, students at the GYAS in Greece will be paired, with one Special Olympics athlete and a peer partner without an intellectual disability, from the same community, state or country.

Input from Special Olympics’ youth leaders from around the world over the past year has led to the creation of the GYAS agenda. Each session was planned by and will be lead by youth participants.

**Global Youth Activation Summit Highlights:**

1. **“Young People Do Change the World” sessions:** GYAS participants and invited guests will participate in a variety of training sessions that will focus on important topics relevant to youth. The theme of these sessions will be “EDUCATE, MOTIVATE and ACTIVATE”.
2. **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.
3. **Photo and Blogging session:** At the GYAS, youth will receive a brief training from experienced peers and media experts in the art of conducting interviews, taking photographs and crafting compelling and inspirational stories of the World Games and Special Olympics Movement.
4. **School Enrichment Exchange:** GYAS participants will spend time in activities with local Greek students who have been involved with the School Enrichment Program over the past nine months. Local students will plan activities that will demonstrate their involvement with Special Olympics.

5. **Webinars:** GYAS Participants and young people around the world will have an opportunity to engage in a real-time discussion and sharing of information.

“We look to young people to be our leaders of change in communities around the world,” shared Timothy Shriver, Special Olympics Chairman and CEO. “Our youth leaders will bring to Greece their unique experiences and insights about how Special Olympics can build communities and in return, they will bring home their work to influence real change with their peers.”

“To me, attending the Global Youth Activation Summit is a great opportunity to know what Special Olympics athletes are experiencing all around the world. I believe grouping all our ideas is the best way to come up with solutions in order to understand the athletes and one another. Then, we can bring these back to school so that we can take the lead together and spread the messages of respect and acceptance to the whole community.” Wai Tsun "Hazel" Law, Partner, Hong Kong.

The 2011 Special Olympics’ Global Youth Activation Summit is the sixth such event to take place. The inaugural global summit was held in 2001 at the Special Olympics World Summer Games in Alaska. Since 2001, there have been 48 youth summits at national, regional and global levels, involving representatives from nearly 140 Special Olympics Programs and 2,700 young leaders.

The summit is one of several Special Olympics global initiatives helping to promote school communities where all young people are agents of change. The summit is made possible through an award from the U.S. Department of Education and a generous donation from Special Olympics Global Sponsor Mattel Children’s Foundation.

For more information on the 2011 Special Olympics Global Youth Summit, visit <http://www.specialolympics.org/schools_and_youth.aspx>.

Alternating between Summer Games and Winter Games, Special Olympics World Games bring public attention to the talents and capabilities of people with intellectual disabilities, helping to change attitudes and break down barriers that exclude them from the mainstream of the community. The last Special Olympics World Games were Winter Games held in Boise, Idaho in 2009. The last World Summer Games were held in Shanghai, China in 2007.

For information about the upcoming Special Olympics World Summer Games Athens 2011, visit the Games’ official website at [www.athens2011.org](http://www.athens2011.org). Fans are also encouraged to learn more at the following online channels:

 [www.facebook.com/SpecialOlympicsWorldGames](http://www.facebook.com/SpecialOlympicsWorldGames)

 [www.twitter.com/Athens\_2011](http://www.twitter.com/Athens_2011)
 [www.youtube.com/Athens2011](http://www.youtube.com/Athens2011)

**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 3.5 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](file:///%5C%5Cwww.specialolympics.org#_blank).

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