



Special Olympics Messaging & Talking Points

Main Message

Special Olympics is a global movement that unleashes the human spirit through the transformative power and joy of sports, every day around the world. Using sports as the catalyst and programming around health and education, Special Olympics is fighting inactivity, injustice and intolerance. As a result people with intellectual disabilities become accepted and valued members of their communities, which leads to a more respectful and inclusive society for all.

Main Talking Points

- Special Olympics has a unified strategy that brings people with and without intellectual disabilities together because when you connect our athletes with others, hearts and minds are open and misunderstanding and negative attitudes disappear. We primarily bring people together through sport. We are implementing this strategy in schools and communities worldwide creating youth leaders, a unified generation, who will create a world of respect and inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities.
- Special Olympics reveals the champion in all of us - athletes, volunteers, coaches, fans, supporters, and others by illustrating that everyone can excel when obstacles like stigma and prejudice are removed and people are given a chance.
- Special Olympics fights for respect and dignity for people with intellectual disabilities, so together we can end discrimination, inequality, and hate.
- Special Olympics athletes lead the way, acting as the Movement's spokespeople, visionaries, and inspiration, changing attitudes of everyone they encounter and shattering the myths that people with intellectual disabilities are less capable than others of leading fulfilling lives and contributing greatly to their communities.
- Special Olympics promotes healthy, vibrant lives for everyone, grounded in physical activity, sound nutrition and a deeply held commitment to improving, competing, and achieving.
- According to the definition by the American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD), an individual is considered to have an intellectual disability (mental retardation*) based on the following three criteria:
 1. Intellectual functioning level (IQ) is below 70-75;
 2. Significant limitations exist in two or more adaptive skill areas; and
 3. The condition manifests itself before the age of 18.



- Special Olympics is active around the world and every day. Competitions, trainings, and other activities are on-going and occur every day.
- There are many shared benefits for all who participate in Special Olympics: dignity, pride, joy, justice, fitness, empowerment, friendship, acceptance and community.
- We welcome you to share your Special Olympics experience:
 - facebook.com/SpecialOlympics
 - twitter@/SpecialOlympics
 - youtube.com/SpecialOlympicsHQ
 - instagram.com/SpecialOlympics
 - SpecialOlympics.org/share

By the Numbers

ATHLETES – The Special Olympics Movement includes more than **4.4 million athletes**

- 4,427,447 total athletes, 3,236,546 competing and another 1,190,901 training.
- However, this represents a small fraction (as little as 2%) of the total worldwide population with intellectual disabilities.
- More than 80% of Special Olympics athletes live in countries outside of the United States.
- 33.5% of athletes are adults (22 years of age or older).

COMPETITIONS – The movement holds more than **81,000 sporting competitions** every year

- 81,129 competition held in 2013, averaging 222 every day; 9 every hour. These events range from local competition or sports tournaments to Regional or World Games.

VOLUNTEERS – The movement is driven by our volunteers, with more than **1.3 million** providing their time and expertise in 2013.

- 360,392 coaches
- 234,120 youth volunteers
- 96,000 law enforcement officers
- 16,804 health care professionals

PROGRAMS – The movement consists of **226 accredited Programs operating in 170 countries and thousands of local community Programs and clubs.**

REVENUE – For fiscal year 2013, revenue generated for Special Olympics totaled nearly \$110 million. This revenue includes contributions from direct mail, individual and corporate entities, federal and non-federal grants, royalty income, accreditation fees, investment income and other income.



Sports

- The Special Olympics real sports experience is one in which people with intellectual disabilities lead healthy, vibrant lives grounded in on-going sports and physical activity, sound nutrition and a deeply held conviction to improve, compete, achieve and demonstrate their personal best to themselves and their community.
- Special Olympics delivers high-quality, year-round competition and training opportunities in a variety of sports in an inclusive culture that stresses athletic excellence, rewards determination, emphasizes health, and celebrates personal achievement.
- Special Olympics is not just an event but a way of life that creates a universal culture of high expectations & sports excellence that enhances the athletic experience and maximizes individual achievement. We believe that each person has individual gifts to share, and we strive to recognize and celebrate each of these gifts.
- Special Olympics offers 32 Official Olympic-type sports 24 summer and 8 winter sports.
- Special Olympics' most popular sports include athletics (track and field), football (soccer), basketball, bocce and bowling.
- Special Olympics Unified Sports® joins people with and without intellectual disabilities as teammates in the same sport. It is inspired by a simple principle: training, playing and competing together is a quick path to understanding, acceptance and friendship.
- Special Olympics has a goal of 1 million Unified Sports teammates (participants with and without disabilities) by the end of 2015.

World Games

- Every two years, the world transcends the boundaries of geography, nationality, political philosophy, gender, age, culture and religion, to come together for the largest sporting and humanitarian event on the planet, the Special Olympics World Games. Alternating between Summer and Winter Games, this event is the flagship event of the Special Olympics Movement, which promotes equality, respect and inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities around the world.
- The Special Olympics World Games feature nine days of challenging and inspiring international competition among thousands of athletes, and is similar in size and scope as Olympic Games. Special Olympics World Games are watched on television by millions of viewers across six continents, and more than a 500,000 spectators including world leaders, celebrities and dignitaries, typically attend the event. The culmination of years of athletic training and competition, the World Games bring together adults and children with intellectual disabilities to compete on one of the world's greatest athletic stages. Along with compelling competition, the work Special Olympics is spearheading in health, youth activation and leadership and community building are celebrated and featured throughout the World Games.
- The Special Olympics World Summer Games will be held July 25 - August 2, 2015, featuring 25 Olympic-style athletic competitions in 27 venues throughout the Los Angeles, CA region and the



next World Winter Games will be held in Graz, Schladming, and Styria, Austria, 18 March through 24 March 2017.

Health

- Special Olympics believes that every person with intellectual disabilities and their family understands what they need to do in order to optimize their health and where accessible information, resources, systems and policies exists at the individual, community, national and global levels that support them in realizing sustainable healthy and productive lives.
- Special Olympics is the world's largest public health organization for people with intellectual disabilities, providing access to free health services for a population with significant, unmet health needs.
- Special Olympics works with our global partners at the B. Thomas Golisano Foundation, Lions Clubs International, Safilo Group and Essilor Vision Foundation to reduce health disparities for people with intellectual disabilities.
- Special Olympics Healthy Athletes® provides free health exams in a fun, welcoming environment that removes the anxiety that often accompanies a visit to a doctor or dentist. **More than 1.4 million free health exams** have been given to Special Olympics athletes to date.
- Eight countries (Mexico, Peru, Romania, Kazakhstan, Malawi, South Africa, Malaysia, and Thailand) and six states in the U.S. (Arizona, Florida, Kansas, New Jersey, Wisconsin and New York) are currently recognized as Healthy Community pilot sites. These pilot sites offer expanded year-round health services including strong partnerships with other organizations to provide follow-up care and provide the most innovative health offerings from Special Olympics including electronic health records and SMS text messaging around health.
- Our impact on the health and wellbeing of people with intellectual disabilities around the world is great, in some cases saving lives by discovering unknown health issues or providing health care that otherwise would not be available.
- Special Olympics health programs not only serves athletes but also trains health care professionals who then go back to their practices with increased knowledge of and compassion for people with intellectual disabilities.
- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), despite the severe need and higher health risk, people with intellectual disabilities are denied health services, community interventions, and there is a lack of targeted interventions and programs for the population.
- Health care professionals who volunteer with Special Olympics have found that Special Olympics athletes are at increased risk of secondary health issues:
 - 37% have obvious, untreated tooth decay
 - 37% needed new eyewear prescription
 - 23% have low bone density
 - 26% percent failed hearing tests
 - 48% have at least one kind of skin or nail condition
 - 59% of adult athletes and 30% of youth athletes are overweight or obese;



Education & Youth Activation

- Special Olympics implements a collaboration strategy with schools and communities to engage young people with and without intellectual disabilities. Through a combination of youth leadership, Special Olympics Unified Sports or inclusive sports, and whole school engagement, the strategy breaks down barriers creating more welcome school environments through social inclusion.
- Special Olympics seeks to have unified programming in 5,000 U.S. schools by 2015, and will continue to grow youth engagement and school activities around the world. We are currently in five pilot countries (Austria, India, Italy, Romania, and Serbia) and will continue to grow around the world.
- Our youth engagement model trains and empowers young people to lead inclusively and take ownership of creating change, through our many initiatives in sports, health, education, and building community. Using evidence-based strategies, youth drive the work with proven impact in areas that we know young people find critical. Youth-led initiatives build a pathway for long-term leadership development and lifetime engagement.
- Many young people are not experiencing the enormous spectrum of benefits that sport and active play bring. As a direct result, childhood obesity, preventable diabetes and a whole host of emotional and physical health disorders have never been more prevalent. In fact 30% of young people are obese.
- Bullying remains a significant problem in schools, isolating students with intellectual disabilities, socially reinforcing negative attitudes towards these students, and denying them the opportunities that others enjoy.
- Students of all abilities have the power to positively impact their school communities by promoting social inclusion. Through Special Olympics, youth are creating an educational environment where respect and acceptance are the norm and all students feel included and engaged.
- Special Olympics provides a number of inclusive activities in schools including unified sports, r-word activism, leadership training, and opportunities for social engagement.
- Special Olympics is leading a global youth movement aimed at expanding our core purpose and embracing and propelling a revolutionary spirit focused on mobilizing youth to **Play** and ultimately **Live Unified**. Our marketing campaign inspires and mobilizes young people to become the Unified Generation, the next generation of individuals who through their connections, technology, concern and action will shape the world to one of respect and acceptance. This will be a multi-faceted awareness and fundraising campaign that leads global communities in conversations and events transcending politics, geographies and intellectual and physical abilities. At its core, this effort is a campaign about tolerance and a call-to-action for people of all ability levels to champion a unified vision of a future where all people are accepted, welcome and connected; where people are healthy both in mind and body and celebrated for their gifts and talents, and a future where equality and justice prevail.



Community Building

- Special Olympics develops and empowers leaders, catalyzing actions that directly benefit people with intellectual disabilities and their communities. By harnessing the power of people to change hearts, minds and behaviors, we create more cohesive and accepting civil societies around the world.
- Special Olympics provides a positive venue for families to become part of a caring community, and to be champions for the movement. They serve as a support network for other relatives of people with intellectual disabilities. They recruit new athletes, coach teams, raise funds, officiate at games, organize and chaperone events, train other volunteers, and advocate for people with intellectual disabilities.
- Corporate partners, their employees, customers and consumers are essential in helping Special Olympics fulfill its mission through the generosity of cash, in-kind donations, volunteers and awareness. Our corporate team works with companies of all sizes with a solid history and strong brand image, including the Christmas Records Trust, the Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics®, The Coca-Cola Company, The Walt Disney Company and ESPN, Lions Clubs International, Mattel, P&G, Bank of America, Essilor Vision Foundation, the B. Thomas Golisano Foundation, Finish Line, The Safeway Foundation, and Safilo Group.
- Special Olympics works with international, national, state, and local governments and organizations around the world to raise awareness, change laws, and influence policy.
- Law enforcement officers around the world are volunteering together to champion acceptance and inclusion in their communities with Special Olympics. The Law Enforcement Torch Run® (LETR) for Special Olympics is the movement's largest grass-roots fundraising and awareness building volunteer corps, raising nearly half a billion dollars to date.
- Through bold innovation and enormous generosity, the recording industry has made beautiful music benefiting Special Olympics since 1987. The *A Very Special Christmas* record series has raised more than \$109 million to date used to grow Special Olympics internationally and impact hard-to-reach urban centers of the United States and the world.



UPDATED BOILER PLATE:

About Special Olympics:

Special Olympics is a global movement that unleashes the human spirit through the transformative power and joy of sports, every day around the world. We empower people with intellectual disabilities to become accepted and valued members of their communities, which leads to a more respectful and inclusive society for all. Using sports as the catalyst and programming around health and education, Special Olympics is fighting inactivity, injustice and intolerance. Founded in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, the Special Olympics movement has grown to more than 4.4 million athletes in 170 countries. With the support of more than 1.3 million coaches and volunteers, Special Olympics delivers 32 Olympic-type sports and more than 81,000 games and competitions throughout the year. Special Olympics is supported by individuals, foundations and partners, including the Christmas Records Trust, the Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics®, The Coca-Cola Company, The Walt Disney Company and ESPN, Lions Clubs International, Mattel, P&G, Bank of America, Essilor Vision Foundation, the B. Thomas Golisano Foundation, Finish Line, The Safeway Foundation, and Safilo Group. Visit Special Olympics at www.specialolympics.org. Engage with us on: [twitter@specialolympics](https://twitter.com/specialolympics), fb.com/specialolympics, youtube.com/specialolympicshq, instagram.com/specialolympics and specialolympicsblog.wordpress.com.

Mission Statement:

The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

###