

Special Olympics Healthy Athletes Healthy Hearing



Special Olympics
Healthy
FOUNDATION
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Healthy Hearing is changing lives in communities by providing free hearing screenings and other medical services, including ear wax removal, swim molds, hearing aid maintenance and minor repairs for people with intellectual disabilities. **Most athletes' hearing problems are previously undetected, un-served or under-treated.** Hearing loss negatively impacts communication ability, quality of life, social interactions and health.

Importance and Impact

Healthy Hearing screenings have found that a large percentage of Special Olympics athletes in the U.S. have untreated ear and hearing conditions.

- **42%** have blocked or partially blocked ear canals
- **28%** failed Puretone hearing examinations
- **8%** have permanent hearing loss
- **54,596 screenings** performed in the United States from 2007 to December 2018

Purpose of the Screening and Goals:

- Increase access to hearing care for Special Olympics athletes, as well as all individuals with intellectual disabilities.
- Identify permanent hearing loss and provide referral for follow-up care.
- Identify medical issues causing hearing loss and refer to the appropriate medical professional for follow-up.
- Raise audiologists' awareness of the hearing concerns of people with special needs, including the difficulties involved in diagnosing and accessing treatment options.
- Provide educational and clinical opportunities for students training in the field of Speech Language Pathology and Audiology.
- Provide a list of regional audiologists and ear, nose and throat specialists who care for people with special needs to all athletes who participate in the Special Olympics Healthy Hearing program.
- Develop a body of knowledge about ear canal hygiene of children and adults with special needs.
- Educate athletes about ways to prevent hearing loss from noise exposure.

CONTACT

Meggin van der Hilst: Senior Manager, Special Olympics Healthy Hearing
E-mail: mvanderhilst@specialolympics.org

Beth Lannon: Global Clinical Advisor, Special Olympics Healthy Hearing
E-mail: bethlannon@yahoo.com

Melina Willems: Global Clinical Advisor, Special Olympics Healthy Hearing
E-mail: melina.willems@arteveldehs.be