



**Special  
Olympics**

## Executive News Update

Dear Program Leaders,

For nearly 20 years, Special Olympics has been impacting lives around the world through its health work. Every day, we hear the stories of how improved health leads to [better athletic performance](#) and a [better quality of life](#) overall. We also hear the [underlying statistics and research](#) that too clearly demonstrate the health barriers that remain for Special Olympics athletes and others with intellectual disabilities in every region of the world.

Today, I am excited to outline how the [largest gift in Special Olympics history](#) will impact our movement. Over the next five years, Special Olympics will be expanding our health program with the all-pervading goal of more inclusive societies where athletes are equipped to achieve their strongest performances on and off the field. Everything we do as an organization is aimed at this ideal, and our health work is no different.

The generous donation from the Golisano Foundation will help us work toward this change by expanding our Special Olympics Healthy Athletes® events, which provide free health exams and some services (such as eye glasses and hearing aids) for athletes and expanding the [Healthy Communities model](#), as a recognition program which works (often through partnerships) to ensure athletes receive the follow up care they need and have access to community wellness and fitness programs on a year round basis, to improve athlete health and athletic performance. We will build on the strengths of our Programs, our volunteers, our athletes and our families to generate further support and resources for better healthcare for people with intellectual disabilities.

We encourage you to explore how you can continue to expand and to infuse health into the lives of the athletes, partners, families and local communities you serve. At the international level, over the next five years, we have the opportunity to issue grants to Programs interested in reaching Healthy Community status. Our goal is to have 100 Programs recognized as Healthy Communities by 2020.

**In addition to providing grants to support Healthy Athletes, over the next five years, Special Olympics will be issuing two types of grants to support Programs committed to reaching Healthy Community recognition:**

(1) A 1-year Healthy Community Grant open to all Programs interested in advancing health programming in an identified area(s). These grants will help Programs achieve Healthy Community recognition or position them to seek a 3-year Healthy Community Grant and eventual recognition as a Healthy Community. Focus areas include: follow-up care partnerships, and ongoing fitness, health and wellness programming.

(2) A 3-year Healthy Community Grant for Programs in good standing that have demonstrated success in health programming and have a commitment to attaining and maintaining Healthy Community recognition. Programs will be asked by their regional Healthy Athletes Manager to apply for these grants each year. Each year, selected Programs will receive funding to become a Healthy Community with a goal of 100 Programs expanding the impact of their health work and reaching Healthy Community status by 2020.

If your Program is ready to explore incorporating health into your programming in 2016 through a 1-year grant, please [complete the 1-year Healthy Community Grant expression of interest](#) and submit to your Regional Healthy Athletes Manager by 11 December 2015. The grant funding will be issued to selected Programs on 1 April 2016. All the information can be found [online](#).

Alternatively, if you think your Program already meets the Healthy Community recognition criteria, please [complete the application](#) to receive this status.

We encourage every Program to look for ways to leverage the power and impact of the Golisano gift, through existing and new partnerships, including with governments, to infuse health into Special Olympics. In this way our athletes will be able to compete at the highest level, lead healthy lives, and reach their full potential in their communities.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary Davis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the top and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

Mary Davis, Acting Chief Executive Officer  
Special Olympics, Inc.