

Athletes Shine at the 2022 Special Olympics USA Games

In June, more than 5,500 athletes, coaches and Unified Partners united for the 2022 Special Olympics USA Games in Orlando, Florida. With 20,000 volunteers and more than 100,000 spectators, these were the largest-ever USA Games in Special Olympics history.

For seven days, Special Olympics athletes showcased their awe-inspiring abilities as they shined, demonstrating their love of sport.



SPECIAL OLYMPICS
USA GAMES
ORLANDO 2022



Athlete Spotlight:

Brittany Tagliareni, TENNIS

"I was born with autism and was nonverbal. I also have apraxia and dyspraxia, which makes speech difficult for me, and I have difficulty with fine motor skills. I love tennis, but I have to work hard because of my challenges. I also have perception problems, so I have to really focus to hit the ball."

– Brittany

Brittany has been a Special Olympics athlete for over nine years and, despite facing obstacles throughout her journey, has been exceptionally successful on the court. An accomplished tennis player, Brittany has taken home a 2017 ESPY Honorary Award, gold medals at Special Olympics Florida State Games, a silver medal at the 2011 Special Olympics World Games Athens, Greece, and multiple gold medals at the 2018 Special Olympics USA Games that were held in Seattle, WA.

When asked how Special Olympics and the USA Games have impacted her life, she said, "It has changed my life in ways I could never imagine. It is a great honor to compete in the USA Games and makes me realize that all my hard training and practice have paid off."

When she's not on the court playing tennis or working out, Brittany volunteers at a pet training program because she loves all animals. She has a special affection for dogs. She also enjoys other hobbies such as listening to music, singing and dancing.

**Special
Olympics**



Special Olympics Stands Unified with Ukrainian Refugees

The refugee crisis in Europe has overcome millions of Ukrainian families, including children with intellectual disabilities. Already one of the most overlooked populations on earth, they are now facing the most challenging of situations — not only fleeing violence, but finding a new home, community and support system.

Special Olympics supports and protects the lives of people with ID and their families wherever they are, especially in the most desperate of times. Through its Unified with Refugees platform, Special Olympics is actively supporting Ukrainian refugees by helping them to settle into their host communities. For example, Special Olympics Europe Eurasia is helping

families connect with early childhood development activities through the Special Olympics Young Athletes® program, and providing sports equipment to national Special Olympics organizations in places like Slovakia, Poland and Hungary to engage young people and increase sports activities.

By supporting refugee families, Special Olympics can continue to serve as a beacon of hope, providing a sense of belonging and protection to perhaps the most vulnerable, at-risk populations in the world, especially in conflict settings. As a supporter of our movement, we know you are right here with us.



Athlete Spotlight:

Makar, SPECIAL OLYMPICS SLOVAKIA

Makar is a Ukrainian boy with autism who recently joined Special Olympics Slovakia gymnastics and swimming after fleeing from the violence in Ukraine with his family. Makar told Eva Gazova, the national director of Special Olympics Slovakia, that he also likes to ski and roller skate. When she asked him if he would like new roller skates, he said “da” (yes). Without hesitation, Eva promised Makar that Special Olympics will try to get him a new pair of roller skates to replace the pair he left behind in Ukraine.

Despite everything they’ve experienced, his mom, Viktoria, already feels a sense of hope for the future of Makar in his new community. “It is a chance for my son to see that his life goes on.”

Eva Gazova reminds us, “The people of Ukraine are the same as us... and the same people as in the U.S. They lost their future and their dreams. They haven’t deserved any minute of it.” She adds, “My best birthday present was meeting with Makar’s mom. I introduced her to Special Olympics Slovakia. She and her son became officially part of Special Olympics yesterday; we will give him support, confidence, love and joy from sport as we do for all Slovakian athletes with ID.”