

ANNUAL REPORT

2024



Special
Olympics





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”

Cristhian Sornoza
Special Olympics Ecuador athlete

MESSAGE FROM AN ATHLETE LEADER

NEVER STOP DREAMING!

My name is Cristhian Alexander Sornoza Morillo. I come from the Manabí province in Ecuador, a very humble background, country people, who educated me, taught me many values, respect and responsibility, but above all, humility and love. Since I was little, I've always been a dreamer...dreaming of things I wanted but which were not easy to get. I dreamt of traveling to cities I'd never been to, playing football (soccer) professionally, and just travelling around the world.

I was always surrounded by a lot of love and caring, although since I was young, I've had many challenges and complications related to studying at school due to my disability. Back in those days, we didn't have people specialized in understanding, much less teaching, people like me, and for that reason, I was not able to finish my studies. I got as far as 7th grade high school; the more I advanced, the harder it was for me to understand things, but I always felt a passion for sports—When I played soccer, I didn't feel my disabilities affected my development.

In 2012, I had the opportunity to meet a coach who worked with people with intellectual disabilities for Special Olympics Ecuador events. Thanks to him, I had the opportunity to participate in Provincial Games, and that's how I ended up representing my province in the Special Olympics Ecuador National Games, in Machala City. From that point on, my history with Special Olympics Ecuador began; I represented my city and province on many occasions and managed to become the Soccer Team Captain for Special Olympics Manabí.

My greatest dream was about to happen: traveling and representing my country internationally! I made it into the qualifiers and preparation for the Special Olympics Unified Cup in Chicago, 2018. I still get teary-eyed when I think back to that moment they told me I had made the selection that would represent our country, I had in my hands the opportunity to show that with courage, discipline and commitment, dreams can come true.

I had never felt such a warm welcome, coach Esteban Navarrete and the whole Special Olympics Ecuador staff made us feel like we were all part of one team, one family. The constant training and preparation, all of that helped to achieve that which we wanted so bad: going to and winning in the Special Olympics Unified Cup, in which I went as captain of my dear team.

We came back as world champions... Who would believe the kid that loved soccer would end up representing Ecuador and showing that making your dreams come true is not so hard when you truly work at it and put your all into it.

Soon after I felt the need to become an independent person, but there weren't many job opportunities for people with disabilities. I got a job at a cabinetmaking

workshop, and from there, I was able to build my own home and sometime later, start my own business “Ebanistería El Sornoza” (“Sornoza's Cabinetmaker Shop”). I dream of continuing its growth, and provide jobs for people like me, that need that one opportunity to move forward.

I continued participating in Special Olympics events, but as an Athlete Leader. I was part of the First National Unified Leadership Congress in Ambato, in 2022, and from there, I was able to participate in the 2023 Regional Youth Leadership Summit in Medellin, together with my friend and Unified partner, Antonella Montalvo. In 2024, I was able to take part in the organizing of CONMEBOL's and Special Olympic Latin America's Football Week in Ecuador, and once again relive the passion I have for that sport, one that I've never stopped loving. Soccer and sports can unite people.

One of the greatest experiences in my life was participating in the Regional Athlete Leadership Congress, held during the IV Special Olympics Latin American Games in Asunción, in October of 2024. It was a unique experience, I got to meet and share with leaders from so many other countries in the region, and learn from each one of them. When I first got wind of the invitation and the opportunity to be elected as member of the Regional Council, I focused on a clear, single purpose. I worked to achieve it, and was chosen among 20 other leaders, together with my colleagues from Nicaragua and Chile. From that moment on, our duty became to listen and amplify the voices that go unheard, because we represent thousands of athletes in Latin America and we need to speak for them to the whole world.

We will work for a more inclusive world, in sports, in the workplace, in health, in life itself, I hope the day comes where we no longer have to ask for or look for inclusion, because it'll be normalized as a daily thing and not a demand, but a part of life. I want to be an example for people with disabilities that want to achieve their dreams, but in particular, to my daughter Jesslyn Sornoza; she's five years old and I want her to see that her dad can be a role model in many things.

I've always been a dreamer. Remember, even the most difficult dreams can be achieved, and it's not just about the dream becoming true, but in trying to do so and the road we take to accomplish it.

Never give up, never stop dreaming, DREAM BIG.

Cristhian Sornoza

Cristhian Sornoza
Special Olympics athlete



MESSAGE FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

WE STAY READY

How long does it take to prepare for a marathon? Not long—if you stay ready.

In April 2024, nineteen-year-old Lloyd Martin of Special Olympics Great Britain captured the world's imagination and a Guinness World Record as the youngest known individual with Down syndrome to complete a marathon. His first marathon. His first race beyond five kilometers. A staggering 26.2 miles. And he did it not just with muscle and stride, but with joy, grit, and grace.

How did he achieve such a feat in just a few short months of training? The truth is, Lloyd Martin was ready before the starting pistol ever fired. He brought the spirit of an athlete who had trained for years, not just in sport, but in life. Rain or shine, in chill winds or morning mist, he showed up. Through football and gymnastics, with quiet determination and moments of doubt, he built something no stopwatch can measure: **endurance of the soul.**

Readiness is never a solo act. It's a team sport.

Behind every mile Lloyd ran was a network of his people—family, coaches, and friends at Special Olympics Great Britain who helped design a plan. The goal? One more mile each week. A challenging but doable feat. And when the big day came, he danced, he cartwheeled through the streets, and he high-fived spectators along the course, feeding off their joy, energizing each stride he took.

"If there are puddles on the marathon," he said, "then you have to dodge them... But if you do get them, that's fine."

A simple phrase. A profound truth.

Because readiness isn't about avoiding the puddles of life, it's about the courage to get your shoes wet and keep running.

This is the spirit of Special Olympics. We stay ready.

Ready to train. Ready to compete. Ready to learn. Ready to lead. Ready to thrive. In every corner of the globe, we give people with intellectual and developmental disabilities the chance to play, to strive, and to shine. We offer structured training and meaningful competition. We provide moments of connection through a loud cheer or a beaming smile and help each other leap over life's puddles or splash right through them together.

In 2024, we carried forward the legacy of the Special Olympics World Games in Berlin (Berlin Games) and turned our focus toward Turin, where the 2025 Special Olympics World Winter Games await. But a year without a global Games is anything but a year off. Not for our athletes. Not for our movement.

Across more than 200 countries, every 8½ minutes, a Special Olympics competition unfolded somewhere in the world—totaling 60,000 events this year alone.

But this momentum is powered by more than numbers.

It's built on the devotion of nearly 400,000 coaches and over 800,000 volunteers, individuals who pour their hearts, their expertise, and their time into this global family. They stay ready so our athletes can shine.

And readiness goes far beyond the playing field.

This year, we trained nearly 50,000 healthcare professionals to deliver compassionate, inclusive care to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities—bringing our all-time total to more than 300,000 since 2012. Just like in sport, achieving good health takes commitment, learning, and heart.

Young people are staying ready, too. In 2024, we nearly doubled our network of Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools® (UCS) to 39,000 worldwide. And it doesn't stop there. From the UAE to Uruguay, from Italy to Indonesia, our Hubs of Excellence are lighting the path forward—helping leaders from over 60 countries embrace inclusive education as the foundation of their future.

With support from His Highness Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the United Arab Emirates has taken a bold stance for global inclusion—hosting the Inclusion for Tomorrow summit, supporting new research, and welcoming over 1,300 changemakers to the Global Virtual Youth and Educator Summit.

We are building communities and workplaces that are not just ready to include, but ready to transform.

Our partnership with Harvard University's EASEL Lab gives us the tools to do just that: frameworks to nurture inclusive mindsets, to plant seeds of belonging that will bloom in every sector of society.


As the calendar turns, we don't rest, we rise.

Our athletes are ready.
Ready to show the world their gifts.

Ready to remind every spectator, every coach, every volunteer, and every bystander that this is a movement where everyone belongs.

And they stay ready.
So, here's the question from all of us in the Special Olympics family:

Are you ready to join them?
Because we're ready for you.



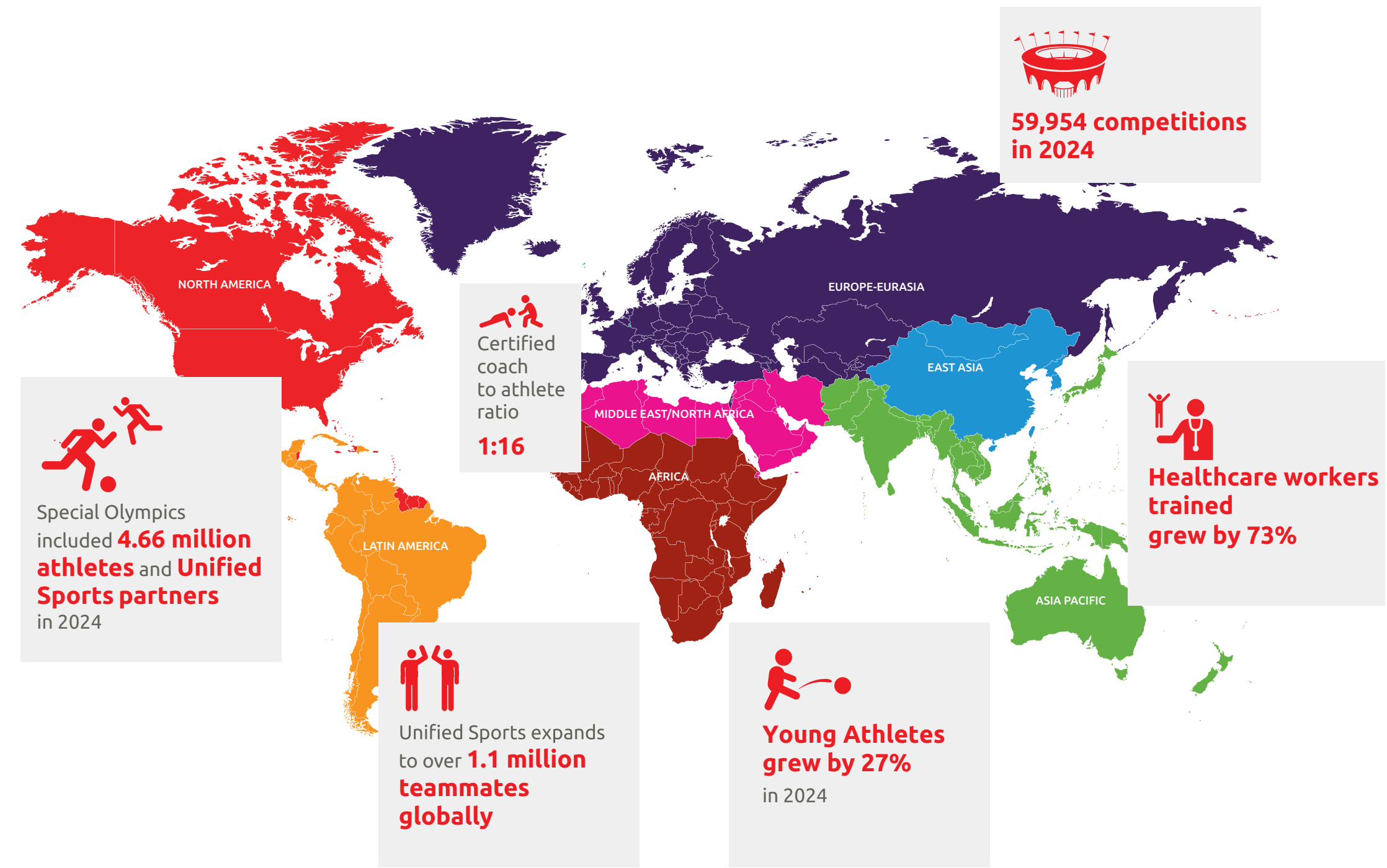
Timothy Shriver, Ph.D.
Chairman



Mary Davis
Chief Executive Officer



OUR IMPACT
IN 2024



SPORT DEVELOPMENT HIGHLIGHTS



SPORTS PARTNERSHIPS

Special Olympics continues to focus heavily on the **expansion and growth of sport partnerships**, using these platforms to demonstrate the unique ability of sports to serve as a vehicle for the social inclusion of children and adults with intellectual disabilities.

As of 2024, Special Olympics has 1271 international, regional, and national level sport federation **partnerships** all working in unison to bring more athletes with IDD onto the playing field. In collaboration with **18 International Federation partners**, Special Olympics also expanded competition opportunities for athletes around the world throughout the year.

1271

Sports Federations
Partnerships



SPORT DEVELOPMENT

HIGHLIGHTS

COACH EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

COACH DEVELOPMENT

2024 saw the launch of the Women in Sport webinar series with first two webinars “Engaging Girls and Women in Sport” and “Pathways to Leadership” attracting 1175 registrations and 369 attendees live on the webinars.

Meanwhile, the Coach webinar series continued to go from strength to strength with a fourth edition focused on virtual training and information sessions with Special Olympics coaches around the world delivered in 2024. Six webinar sessions were held as part of the series, two focused on coaching theory with experts from the field, and four sport-specific sessions were delivered by sport federation partners. There were 6,100 registrations across the 6 webinars with close to 2,400 attendees live across the webinars. The Coaching newsletter, meanwhile, expanded its audience and reach with sign-ups now at more than 3,500.

Improving coaching standards and the development of a new Coaching Standards for International Competitions - for release in 2025 - was a major focus of work throughout the year.

In partnership with Athlete Leadership, a new program for coaches with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) was launched (Coaches with IDD Level 1 Sport Assistant program). Finally, in a joint project developed with the Health team, an e-learning course ‘Understanding Athlete Medical and Registration Forms’ was launched and made available to coaches.

Out on the pitch, in a new partnership with Nike, a Unified Football league for women and girls spanning five national Special Olympics Programs was successfully delivered with 1200 players and partners, and 300 coaches taking part.

6
Webinars

2,400
Live Attendees

3,500
Newsletter Reach



MATP

A busy year of expansion for Special Olympics Motor Activity Training Program (MATP) program which is designed for athletes with severe disabilities who cannot access traditional Special Olympics team and individual competitions. On-site train-the-trainer courses took place with Special Olympics regions, while MATP development grants were delivered to 13 Special Olympics national programs. 2024 also saw the redevelopment and publication of a range of new support materials and resources for MATP coaches, programs, and other key constituents.

GRANT FUNDING

In 2024 Sports issued more than 160 subgrants across all Special Olympics regions totaling \$2.1M in direct local investment to Special Olympics programs. The grant funding is drawn from seven partnerships: Lions Clubs International Foundation, Toyota, Gallagher, Michael Phelps Foundation, ESPN, Nike, and Topgolf.

The funding drives innovation and grassroots development in the local program areas:

- Coach Education
- Special Olympics Unified Sports®
- Female Sport & Football
- Swim & Golf Development
- Equipment & Operations
- Coach Developer Training
- MATP
- Badminton & Athletics Development
- Sport Competitions
- Regional Trainings
- Volunteer Support

COMPETITION

Special Olympics announced that for the first time a Special Olympics World Games are going to be held in the Latin American region with Santiago, Chile hosting the Games in 2027. A global announcement in support of Santiago 2027 and an agreement signing event took place.

The one-year anniversary of the Berlin Games was celebrated with a global webinar and release of the official impact and legacy reports. Meanwhile, Special Olympics Italy staged their 2024 National Winter Games in its build-up to the Special Olympics World Winter Games Turin 2025



A VISION FOR INCLUSIVE HEALTH EVERYWHERE



“In Suriname...the government helps (our) health by giving us a small bit of money each month but signing up for this is like solving a puzzle. Some people can't figure it out, so they don't get any help.”

These were the words of Special Olympics Suriname Health Messenger Rachel Veldkamp, advocating alongside the World Health Organization's Assistant Director-General for Universal Health Coverage to a full room of 110 people at the 2024 World Health Summit.

Rachel is one of over 1,000 Health Messengers activated in 2024 who remind us all that addressing these challenges, and their impact on the health of individuals with IDD, makes the work of Special Olympics Health as important as it is urgent.



HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES WORLDWIDE

Started as a pilot in 2012 through the support of the Golisano Foundation, Special Olympics Healthy Communities® is a model in which Special Olympics Programs implement programming in four foci – Prevention, Assessment, Training, and Health Systems Strengthening.

By the end of 2024, 154 Programs had initiated Healthy Communities, surpassing the 2026 goal and progressing towards the vision of ensuring that every athlete has the opportunity to benefit from health programming.

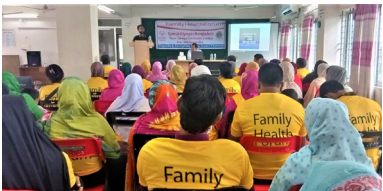
PREVENTION

Over 48,000 new Young Athletes joined Special Olympics during the course of the year, bringing the total to almost 300,000 Young Athletes, with and without IDD, who have benefited from the improved motor skills, and social and cognitive development that this program derives.

New Young Athletes lesson plans were introduced, offering a 30-week program with over 100 new activities to foster motor skills, leadership development, and academic alignment. To support these activities and encourage increased stimulation by parents and caregivers in the home, the Young Athletes app was updated with 175 new activities, including a focus on children under three years of age. By year-end, the app had nearly 1,500 users from 51 countries and all US states, achieving a download-to-user ratio of 47% (industry standards consider 25% and above as exceptional).



Family Health Forums experienced significant growth in 2024 with over 19,000 families, caregivers and athletes benefitting from them. These forums took advantage of a new, standardized set of resources developed by experts that covers healthy eating, stress management, diabetes prevention, and family fitness.



Special Olympics Fitness, which engages athletes in a minimum of 6 weeks of physical activity, nutrition, and hydration programming, reached over 300,000 participants. Structured fitness models were implemented to grow programming aligned to evidenced-based practices that improve health for people with IDD. Significant progress was also made with the Fitness Captains program during this year, empowering athletes to lead health education sessions and warm-ups and cool-downs to position them to serve as motivators to their peers. Additionally, a new fitness app was developed to better meet the needs of athletes through virtual fitness. The app was piloted in six US Programs, offering features like manual tracking of dietary intake, exercise, and healthy mind activities. This app will launch in 2025 and be used to engage athletes in successive fitness challenges and healthy behavior tracking, while also evaluating the impact of their virtual fitness engagement of athletes.

ASSESSMENT

Healthy Athletes® screenings have been an integral part of the Special Olympics’ athlete experience for over twenty-five years and have resulted in thousands of athletes having health issues identified and addressed.

In 2024, globally, 95,986 screenings were conducted with 69,500+ individual digital records captured to aid tracking follow-up care, monitoring improvements in health outcomes and supporting surveillance and advocacy efforts.

Over 8,100 pairs of prescription eyewear were provided to athletes, correcting vision and allowing athletes to better perform both on and off the field of play. An additional 140 athletes were fitted with hearing aids provided by Starkey Cares in partnership with Healthy Hearing, both at screening events and in their communities. Among two of the most moving breakthroughs in 2024 came when athletes in Papua New Guinea and Paraguay were fitted for hearing aids and heard for the first time through Special Olympics Healthy Hearing. Given the poignancy of these moments, it is no surprise that both screenings, captured on video and shared on social media, are among the highest performing Special Olympics social media posts of 2024, collectively reaching over 75,000 users on Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn and achieving engagement rates well above the industry standard.

Healthy Athletes® screenings resulted in 4,039 urgent and 18,967 non-urgent referrals. Of these, 67% had access to follow-up care, with 52% confirmed to have received necessary care. Financial

constraints and the persistence required to navigate increasingly complex health systems continue to serve as barriers to care, but some positive results through partnerships as well as embedding follow up and reminders within the recently piloted electronic health record suggest that these rates will continue to trend positively.

Important milestones in 2024 include the expansion of Healthy Young Athletes (pediatric screening) to 23 Programs, delivering 993 screenings focused on children aged 2 to 7. Of these, 73% were in low-to-middle income countries and the majority formed part of the Child and Family Health model, thus leveraging the added benefits of family and caregiver education as well early childhood development programming. Healthy Athletes 2.0 was also successfully piloted during this term, featuring evidence-based screenings, standardized referrals, and an updated electronic health record system. Healthy Athletes 2.0 introduced formal mental health screening tools and debuted at the Special Olympics Latin American Games, resulting in 5,120 screenings, 297 urgent referrals, and 1,083 non-urgent referrals.



IMPROVING HEALTH AND SUPPORTING FAMILIES

Improving Health and Supporting Families Special Olympics advanced the Child and Family Health model, which is a holistic intervention aimed at improving the health and development of children with IDD, by providing direct intervention and access to healthcare, while also providing health education, support and agency to their caregivers. The model expanded to new locations, such as Romania, Paraguay, El Salvador, Missouri, Maryland, Ohio, Washington, Maine, and Michigan. These Programs integrated various innovative strategies for implementation, like incorporating the model into family camps and collaborating with local health and education ministries to align services. The model has shown to significantly impact adaptive skill development for children with IDD and improve efficacy and empowerment for parents and caregivers.

“Young Athletes helped me grow as a mother. Being able to complement my daughter’s education with activities that help her improve her skills is something that fills me with joy and satisfaction. Participating in Young Athletes strengthened our family relationships and shows us every day how skilled and brave our daughter is.”

– Mother of a Child & Family Health programming participant, SO Paraguay

ANOTHER REASON TO SMILE



Special Olympics developed preliminary findings to understand cost-effectiveness and return on investment (ROI) for Special Smiles®. Results indicate that athletes referred for dental services demonstrated a high prevalence of oral disease, including dental caries and periodontal infections. In the period studied, Special Smiles effectively averted **1,234** cases of dental caries and **49** cases of periodontal disease.

Preliminary findings of the total savings from these averted dental services were estimated at \$793,713 significantly outweighing the program's cost of \$174,862. This resulted in a benefit-cost ratio of **4.54**, meaning that for every dollar spent, the program delivered **\$4.54** in value, deriving a **354%** ROI.

TRAINING

The training of the healthcare workforce is a critical step to ensure that individuals with IDD are able to receive high quality care at Healthy Athletes events, but also outside of Special Olympics and within their communities. Special Olympics uses the Healthy Athletes® screening program as an opportunity to train clinicians and provide valuable hands-on experience. In 2024, **7,010** clinicians and **12,122** students were trained at Healthy Athletes® events around the world with many of them opting in to Program's provider directories so that they might support athletes with follow up care after the screenings.



An additional **29,176** clinicians and students were trained through online resources and Program-led initiatives. This year, one of the major accomplishments for training was the transition and roll-out of the upgraded Learning Management System (LMS) named the Golisano School of Health Sciences. The Golisano School of Health Sciences extended the reach of health professional schools utilizing the Inclusive Health Fundamentals.



A total of 124 universities currently deploy these foundational trainings. The translation of these modules has sparked interest globally and so far 19 universities in the Special Olympics Middle East North Africa, Asia Pacific, and East Asia regions have adopted the training. A total of **13,320** Health courses were completed through the Golisano School of Health Sciences, over 4 times higher than the courses completed in 2023.

In preparation for the **Special Olympics Latin American Games 2024** and as part of the transition to Healthy Athletes 2.0, the first cohort of Clinical Directors equipped to implement the new screening protocol were selected. Seventy-four new and 17 existing Clinical Directors from Latin America were trained using the updated Clinical Director training modules. A second cohort soon followed with 18 new and 22 existing Clinical Directors from Europe Eurasia and Middle East North Africa who received training in preparation for the Special Olympics World Winter Games Turin 2025.



HEALTH SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING



Special Olympics continues to build the case and tools for inclusive health systems and is a key player in disability-inclusive health. Many of these tools are aimed at healthcare providers, payers, and policymakers and target some of the root causes of the barriers that athletes experience accessing follow up care after Healthy Athletes® screenings. Two examples of resources developed in 2024 are an analysis of coding mechanisms and the potential of value-based payment models to reduce barriers faced by individuals with IDD in accessing healthcare in the U.S. and a new series on navigating the increasingly complex health system, with separate tracks for individuals with IDD and their caregivers which is currently being piloted in eight states in the U.S. These resources live on the newly relaunched **Special Olympics Center for Inclusive Health website** which is frequently updated with new resources developed by collaborators and experts sharing Special Olympics' commitment to inclusive health.

The Rosemary Collaboratory – a global project in which the inclusivity of health systems has been assessed in eleven sites across Special Olympics' seven regions completed its first full year with strong results. In addition to assessing national or state health systems across 60 system-wide indicators, a survey captured the largest health barriers and priorities from over 79 persons with IDD in 59 countries, 375 health workers from more than 40 countries provided perspectives on supply-side barriers, and qualitative discussions were conducted with an additional 77 health workers at the Rosemary Collaboratory sites. The project began gaining visibility with the public and key stakeholders in India, Nigeria, Paraguay, and the US, preparing for the next phase of mobilizing and educating to achieve systems change. These important findings, recommendations, and calls to action will feature in the first of its kind Global report on the Health of Individuals with IDD which will launch in 2025.

INCLUSIVE HEALTH HEADLINES ON THE NFL'S BIGGEST STAGE



In February 2024, Special Olympics returned to Super Bowl Media Row for its 11th consecutive year. This showing was particularly meaningful as it marked the launch of the School of Strength: Snack Zone campaign, supported by Denver Broncos Linebacker and Special Olympics supporter Alex Singleton. Snack Zone teaches athletes how to take their game-day performance to the next level through healthy and nutritious snacking by providing easy-to-understand and actionable information on topics like portion sizes and macronutrients.

During the week leading up to Super Bowl, Alex conducted interviews with Health Messenger, Vince Egan, promoting Snack Zone resources on prominent outlets like CBS Sports Radio and Sirius XM. Thanks to this high-profile coverage, 3,039 individuals utilized Snack Zone resources in 2024 alone.

Later in the year, Alex was nominated for the Walter Payton Man of the Year Award for his work with Special Olympics, and primarily for Snack Zone. WPOMY is the NFL's highest honor recognizing outstanding athletes who demonstrate a significant positive community impact. This recognition raised the profile of Snack Zone and expanded Special Olympics Health's reach to global audiences who may have only been familiar with Special Olympics' work in sport.

ATHLETE LEADERSHIP AND UNIFIED LEADERSHIP



UNIFIED LEADERSHIP

GLOBAL RE-LAUNCH OF THE UNIFIED LEADERSHIP EDUCATION SERIES

Co-developed and co-delivered by people with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), Special Olympics **Unified Leadership** education series leverage more than 55 years of experience cultivating inclusion in sport to deliver game-changing strategies that prepare people without IDD to transform their communities and workplaces to be more inclusive, so that people with IDD have opportunities to make meaningful contributions and thrive. Unified Leadership is a two-part educational series that helps people without IDD grow their inclusive mindsets and behaviors towards people with IDD.

Over the past 3 years, Special Olympics has undertaken research alongside Harvard University's [EASEL](#) lab to discover the essential components of inclusive mindsets and behaviors (final research brief linked [here](#)).

Special Olympics, whether it is through our Unified Sports®, Unified Schools®, Unified Leadership, and other programming, seeks to change attitudes and behaviors of people without intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). It is essential to our theory of change.

This research has given us a targeted way to grow the inclusive mindsets and behaviors of people without IDD. Equipped with this groundbreaking research, the Unified Leadership team leveraged it to ground and strengthen our offerings in Unified Leadership.

In 2024, Special Olympics led the global re-launch of the new “Unified Leadership: Warm-up” and “Unified Leadership: Kickoff” materials to ensure they properly implement the inclusive mindsets and behaviors research.

In November 2024, a remarkable two-day convening was hosted by Special Olympics Europe Eurasia in London, UK. The event brought together Special Olympics Programs from Belgium, Italy, Great Britain, and Romania, as well as Regional and Special Olympics headquarters staff from all seven regions.

The primary focus of the convening was to:

- Acquire knowledge on Unified Leadership education and be able to speak accurately to what it is and its impact.
- Discuss the best way to align and promote Unified Leadership to prospective partners, funders, and constituents of the Special Olympics movement.

“The UL Workshop was a dynamic and enriching experience. I learned that the goal of Unified Leadership is not just to talk about inclusion but to take concrete steps to create truly inclusive environments by changing mindsets and behaviors. I plan to transfer the knowledge gained to the regional staff and national Programs, sharing the materials with external audiences to drive meaningful and lasting change”. Said Kenia Padron, Coordinator, Leadership, Diversity & Inclusion. Special Olympics Latin America (SOLA)

The workshop was not only a platform for sharing knowledge but also a strategic session for discussing new approaches and developing action plans to reach prospective partners.

“During the Unified Leadership Global Workshop, I found it really beneficial having athlete leaders there to hear how they have applied Unified Leadership in their Programs. I liked that different Programs use UL in their own unique way, to suit both the Program and the corporate partners needs. The importance of the UL Approach is vital for ALL departments with SO and it should be a compulsory requirement for all staff as an induction. I plan to feed back at Global level about the importance of having UL in every project eg health, sports, family engaging”. Said Kiera Byland BEM, Special Olympics International board member and athlete leader.

The Unified Leadership education series is a cornerstone of Special Olympics’ efforts to create an inclusive society.



The new 2024-2027 Global Athlete Leadership Council (GALC) and Sargent Shriver Global Messengers (SSGMs) met for a week of onboarding, training, and sharing in Washington, D.C. in May 2024.

Both groups had full days of training, goal setting, team building, and learning about their new roles. Meeting at the Special Olympics International headquarters gave all 20 athlete leaders a chance to meet department heads and experts across the spectrum of Special Olympics Programs.

ATHLETE LEADERSHIP

SETTING THE STAGE FOR FOUR YEARS OF SUCCESS IN LEADERSHIP AND ADVOCACY

COMMON GROUND AND SPECIALIZED INSTRUCTION

The first day of training covered topics that are common to both groups. On the second and third days, each group had training and experiences that strengthened the specific skills needed for their roles.

For example, the members of the GALC learned and practiced skills needed by members of a decision-making team. They worked on goal setting, leading discussions, time management, working with Special Olympics staff, and representing other athletes in their regions.

The SSGMs focused on telling their stories through public speaking. They worked on writing speeches and delivering their speeches. They presented their speeches talking to video camera and then reviewed their performances. They had the opportunity to listen to and comment on each other's speeches.

TOGETHER, DECLARING GOALS AND TAKING ON ACCOUNTABILITY

On the last day, the two groups came together once more. This was the day when learning and inspiration were turned into personal goals. Sharing their goals with the group allowed all of the athlete leaders to declare what they aimed to do. And that's part of the job for both—accountability and commitment to each other.

RECOGNIZING THE LONG-LASTING PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN SPECIAL OLYMPICS AND BANK OF AMERICA

GALC and SSGMs hosted a reception to recognize Bank of America representatives on how their support has given them the chance to receive training, develop skills, and put those skills into practice by taking on leadership position in their Special Olympics Program and Regions.

They shared the impact of the projects they led in their communities over the past year and their experience participating in the 2023 World Summer Games in Berlin.

We can't wait to see all these athlete leaders thrive in their new roles over the next four years!





GLOBAL YOUTH AND EDUCATION

Special Olympics Global Youth and Education was supported by key partners such as His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Ray Lane, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, PMI Educational Foundation, Aspen Institute's Stevens Initiative, U.S. Department of State, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), U.S. Department of Education, and National University.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS GLOBAL CENTER FOR INCLUSION IN EDUCATION

In November 2024, the "Inclusion for Tomorrow" summit united over 300 advocates from 30 countries in Abu Dhabi, supported by His Highness Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan. The event celebrated the UAE as a global leader in inclusive education. Held at the Zayed University Convention Center, the summit showcased the impact of global collaboration in advancing inclusion. The summit was supported by key partners - Mubadala, The Coca-Cola Company, and CNN - and brought together global leaders, advocates, and youth to discuss the importance of inclusion in education and sports. Key sessions included crucial topics such as the role of technology in inclusive education, the transformative power of Unified Champion Schools®, and the economic benefits of inclusive education. Attendees were inspired by insights from high-profile speakers - the United States Special Advisor on International Disability Rights, Sara Minkara, and H.E. Sarah Al Amiri, the UAE Minister of State for Public Education and Advanced Technology. The summit culminated in a call to action for a comprehensive approach to systemic change in education, which the Global Center provides through advocacy, research, policy development, and transformative educational programs.

As one of Special Olympics' priorities, the Global Center is exploring AI's potential to reshape learning environments for students with IDD, releasing a pioneering survey, "Attitudes toward Education and AI," the study is among the first surveys to include the views and sentiments of people with IDD and their broader community. The Global Center also secured a TIME op-ed by Special Olympics Chairman Dr. Timothy Shriver and hosted "Inclusive Futures" in Abu Dhabi in October, an event that highlighted AI's role in advancing inclusive education and economic opportunities for people with IDD.



We must teach education of the heart, alongside education of the mind.



Mary Davis
Special Olympics CEO





In 2024, Special Olympics led the global re-launch of the new “Unified Leadership: Warm-up” and “Unified Leadership: Kickoff” materials to ensure they properly implement the inclusive mindsets and behaviors research.

UNIFIED CHAMPION SCHOOLS EXPANSION

The Global Center’s Hubs of Excellence – Special Olympics Bharat, Pakistan, Argentina, Rwanda, Egypt, and Romania – hosted “Excellence in Action” events to support expansion efforts. These workshops, supported by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, positioned these centers to provide training in launching and growing UCS Programs

- **Bharat and Pakistan:** A combined total of 14 Programs, eight new and six original, came together in Singapore for a co-hosted event that brought together more than 100 participants, including representatives from the UAE Embassy, the United Nations Development Programme, Visa, and Hasbro.
- **Argentina:** Eleven Programs, seven new and four original, gathered in Buenos Aires for workshops and cultural exchange focused on advancing UCS and Unified Sports strategies for national expansion. Participants strengthened collaboration and shared best practices to accelerate inclusion across schools and communities.
- **Rwanda:** Fifteen Programs, representing both new and established initiatives, convened in Kigali alongside partners such as UNICEF and the Rwanda Schools Sports Federation to strengthen collaboration and impact across the region.
- **Egypt:** A total of 10 Programs, seven new and three original, met in Cairo for a series of interactive workshops aimed at deepening UCS growth, sustainability, and national reach. The event emphasized practical planning and peer learning to build momentum for future expansion.
- **Romania:** Seven Programs, four new and three original, participated in sessions focused on teacher engagement, youth leadership, and government partnership. The gathering also featured visits to local UCS schools, showcasing effective models of inclusive education in action.

In addition, collaboration with the Samuel Family Foundation helped expand the *Faces of Inclusion* initiative which spotlighted UCS stories of impact from Jamaica, South Africa, and Paraguay. Upcoming stories from the Middle East and East Asia regions will continue to showcase social inclusion in education and family engagement.

RESEARCH AND PROGRAMMING INNOVATION

The Global Center’s Research Collaborative advanced its Consensus Research Agenda, set for publication in Q1 2025, focusing on inclusive practices in sport and education. The Research Agenda is focused on six topics:

- Frameworks (what inclusive education entails)
- Intentional Populations (refugee and migrant populations and low- and middle-income countries [LMICs])
- Program Evaluation
- Implementation and Capacity Building
- Impact Assessment (measurement of economic, social, and educational systems’ impact)
- AI and Assistive Technologies.

Partnerships with Harvard’s EASEL Lab and the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) supported the development of training and resources aligned with the Inclusive Mindsets and Behaviors (IMB) framework. In close collaboration with global Programs, EASEL and CAST are developing content, training, and measurement tools designed to advance the teaching and impact of IMB across the organization. To facilitate organization-wide adoption, the education team is supporting other departments to ensure alignment and facilitate the creation of tools that can be utilized across contexts, including measures and additional capacity-building resources.

Research Collaborative member, Dr. Michelle Yin from Northwestern University led the final year of a UCS evaluation across six countries, assessing program implementation and impact on social-emotional well-being, inclusion, and school climate, with results to be released in 2025.

INCLUSIVE YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Fostering Inclusive Youth Leaders research brief released by the Global Center highlighted the leadership potential of 1.2 billion young people worldwide, including 240 million with disabilities. The Global Youth Leadership Council (GYLC) led planning for the 2025 Global Youth Leadership Summit at the World Games in Turin, engaged in high-profile advocacy, and mentored regional council members. The Global Virtual Youth and Educator Summit connected over 1,300 attendees across 134 Programs, showcasing innovative youth-led projects from the 2023 Berlin Summit.

Programs like the Unified Youth Exchange have empowered 60 youth leaders from the North America and Latin America regions to launch 32 youth-led entrepreneurship projects. Meanwhile, the Youth Innovation Grant Initiative has supported more than 800 grassroots projects led by 1,500 youth across over 170 Programs since 2018.



LATIN AMERICA'S HEARTS BEAT AS ONE

BIGGER, BETTER
AND MORE INCLUSIVE



9 Days

OF SPORTS
COMPETITIONS

1,000

ATHLETES

23

COUNTRIES

2,000+

VOLUNTEERS

The IV Latin American Special Olympics Games Asunción 2024 gathered over a 1,000 athletes from 23 countries (19 from the Latin American region and 4 guest countries) and over 2,000 volunteers for 9 days of sports competitions and parallel events meant to raise awareness about the need for a more inclusive world and empower members of our Movement to become the leaders we need to achieve that goal.

The Games had the largest female athlete participation in the history of the Latin American Games - 51% of all participants were women!

A total of **14 sports** were available for competitions, with 4 of them being offered for the first time: Badminton, Hockey, Beach Volleyball and Artistic Gymnastics. The **(MATP)** also made its Latin American Games debut in Asunción 2024.

The number of **Athlete Leaders** that participated in meaningful roles was **over 15**; as referees and judges, assistant coaches and members of evaluation committees, the Games featured opportunities for our athletes to shine, in and out of the playing field. The Games also saw the largest Unified Partner participation in Latin American Games history! **Over 70% of Unified Partners** participated in **Unified competitions**, as opposed to 30% in 2017.



SPECIAL OLYMPICS LATIN AMERICA REGIONAL GAMES

OUR PARTNERS

Special Olympics is pleased to recognize our partners for their vital support



PIONEER PARTNER

The Law Enforcement Torch Run® (LETR) for Special Olympics remains our largest grassroots fundraiser and public awareness vehicle. Over the years, LETR has expanded to include a variety of innovative fundraising platforms such as Plane Pull®, Polar Plunge®, Tip-A-Cop®, and Cops on Top®. Since its inception in 1981, LETR has raised more than \$1 billion for Special Olympics Programs and has significantly increased awareness for our athletes and mission. Last year, LETR raised more than \$66,775,000 for their local Special Olympics Programs.

Currently, LETR operates 64 active programs in North America, 15 in Europe, 2 in East Asia, 6 in the Caribbean, and 6 in Oceania. Last year, more than 158,300 law enforcement personnel, Special Olympics athletes, volunteers, and military personnel dedicated their time and resources to LETR activities worldwide.

The LETR Executive Council, in close collaboration with Special Olympics International (SOI), provides leadership and resources for the Torch Run movement. Executive Council members coordinate the World Games Final Leg efforts and the annual LETR International Torch Run Conference. In 2024, nearly 1,200 supporters attended the 39th International LETR Conference in San Antonio, TX. During the conference, LETR launched a LETR.org refresh, and introduced the 'Find Your Why' outreach campaign for programs to use in their efforts.



A VERY SPECIAL CHRISTMAS

PIONEER PARTNER

The A Very Special Christmas albums, created by world renowned musical artists, producers, and A&M Records, has generated \$67 million in royalties since the first album was released in 1987, and over 150 local Special Olympics Programs—primarily in Africa and Asia—have benefitted in the past 36 years. Approximately \$3 million is allocated by the Trust each year to support Special Olympics Athletes. In 2024, over \$2 million was allocated by the Christmas Records Trust to support Program and athlete development.





FOUNDING PARTNER

For over 55 years, The Coca-Cola Company has served as the Founding Partner and Global Sponsor of Special Olympics, thereby demonstrating their belief in the mission of Special Olympics to showcase the limitless potential of individuals with intellectual disabilities and the unifying and transformative power of sport. This enduring partnership has supported countless Special Olympics Programs, athletes, and events with financial and in-kind contributions, employee volunteering, and awareness-raising initiatives.

In 2024, The Coca-Cola Company reinforced their dedication to championing inclusion with the signing of an eight-year partnership extension—the longest-ever renewal in the partnership’s history. Throughout this time, The Coca-Cola Company will be the Official Beverage Partner and sponsor of two Special Olympics World Winter Games (2025 and 2029), two Special Olympics World Summer Games (2027 and 2031), and two Special Olympics USA Games (2026 and 2030). In addition to lending financial support, The Coca-Cola Company will refresh athletes and fans with beverages, mobilize their employee volunteer network to support ground operations, and leverage their global brand to raise awareness about the Special Olympics movement.

Additionally, The Coca-Cola Company sponsored and promoted a video featuring two Special Olympics athletes for the BBC StoryWorks Game On Series. The video had tremendous reach and powerfully showcased the transformative impact of the Movement while further underscoring Coca-Cola’s commitment to supporting Special Olympics athletes 365 days a year. Overall, the partnership continues to be a cornerstone of support for Special Olympics, fostering inclusion and providing significant resources for athletes, coaches, and volunteers worldwide.



BANK OF AMERICA

Bank of America and Special Olympics strengthened our nearly 50 year partnership to champion athlete leaders on and off the field of play, forging stronger connections and opportunities at the local, national, and global levels through their support of our Athlete Leadership, Unified Leadership, and Unified Champion City Schools programming.

As part of the partnership, Bank of America supports Special Olympics’ Global Athlete Regional Council and Sargent Shriver Global Messengers – Special Olympics’ foremost spokespeople. With Bank of America’s support, Council members and Global Messengers were able to gather in Washington, DC for their first-ever joint training, preparing each group for their roles as leaders of our global movement. These leaders from around the world further developed their leadership skills, honed their public-speaking abilities, and deepened their understanding of and connection to the Special Olympics movement.

Bank of America also created experiences and supported events throughout the country. These included a first Play It Forward Clinic with the Washington Commanders, figure skating showcase in Bryant Park in New York City, Special Olympics Washington’s Summer Games, and Special Olympics Minnesota’s Polar Plunge.

A core component of this work is Bank of America employees who serve as event volunteers and Better Money Habits Champions, co-leading Better Money Habits trainings with Athlete Leaders for Special Olympics athletes. Better Money Habits fosters economic mobility through financial education for people of all abilities.

Bank of America’s decades-long support of Special Olympics is rooted in shared values and continues the company’s longstanding commitment to strengthening local communities and economic opportunities through philanthropic giving, workforce development, and volunteerism. Bank of America teammates volunteered nearly 15,000 hours at Special Olympics events around the globe in 2024. Additionally, through employee matching gifts and charitable contributions, Bank of America contributed more than \$2MM to Special Olympics.

[Learn more about Bank of America](#)





ESPN is the **Global Presenting Sponsor of Unified Sports® and Official Broadcaster for the Special Olympics USA and World Games**. ESPN is proud of its relationship with Special Olympics, which spans nearly 40 years. Over the past eleven years, ESPN has continued to deepen its relationship with the Special Olympics movement through its Global support of Unified Sports®.

The alliance between ESPN and Special Olympics uses the power of sports to promote social inclusion and acceptance through two pillars of the relationship: ESPN's Global Presenting Sponsorship of Unified Sports® and a multi-year global programming agreement.

Dedicated to promoting social inclusion through shared sports training and competition experiences, Unified Sports® joins people with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team. It was inspired by a simple principle: training together and playing together is a quick path to friendship and understanding. With support from ESPN and others, Special Olympics has grown this innovative and inclusive program to more than 1.3 million participants.

Since 2013, ESPN has invested over \$11M in cash and in-kind to support Special Olympics' goal of building Unified Sports® programming and resources in over 10,000 schools, reaching over 100,000 new or re-certified coaches.

Through the multi-year global programming agreement, ESPN has served as the Official Broadcaster for the 2015 Special Olympics World Games in Los Angeles, 2017 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Austria, 2018 Special Olympics USA Games in Seattle, 2019 Special Olympics World Games in Abu Dhabi, 2022 Special Olympics USA Games in Orlando and most recently the 2023 Special Olympics World Games in Berlin.

ESPN and Disney employees have been engaged in volunteerism with Special Olympics for all of their nearly 40-year relationship, including more than 100 Disney employees volunteering at the 2023 Special Olympics World Games in Berlin.



Lions Clubs International FOUNDATION

The Special Olympics Lions Clubs International Foundation Mission: Inclusion partnership witnessed remarkable impact, expansion, and excitement as part of an action-packed 2024. Motivated by a shared commitment to inclusive development through service, Mission: Inclusion brought forth eye health and vision care screenings, inclusive sports, family health education, refugee support and so much more to individuals with IDD, their families, and the wider community.

Through the Opening Eyes® program, thousands of Special Olympics athletes received prescription and protective eyewear across more than 80 nations.

The Unified Sports® program saw strong growth in the participation of Leo youth members, committing to sports and community engagement for and with Special Olympics athletes, including through the Unified with Refugees program and the empowerment of refugee youth. Through the volunteer engagement and strong support of the Lions Clubs International Foundation, the Special Olympics Motor Activity Training Program expanded to over 20 nations around the world, bringing motor skill development, family support, and dignity to individuals with severe and profound IDD, representing a key service innovation for Mission: Inclusion and bringing transformative support to those who need it most.

Finally, over 13,000 athletes and families gained important access to health education including diabetes awareness through over 60 Family Health Forums conducted around the world.





Golisano^{FOUNDATION}

Imagine the possibilities!

Tom Golisano, an entrepreneur, philanthropist and civic leader, is the founder of Paychex, Inc., a national leader in the payroll and human resource industry. The Golisano Foundation, which he established in 1985, is one of the largest private foundations in the U.S. dedicated to making the world a better place for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

In September 2021, Special Olympics received its largest single private gift in the organization's 53-year history from Tom Golisano. Mr. Golisano's prior and pledged gifts of \$67 million have been utilized to expand the Special Olympics Healthy Communities® program, which provides health services globally for people with intellectual disabilities, a population that remains critically underserved. Through this support, Special Olympics is now providing comprehensive health programming in 154 Special Olympics Programs, exceeding the goal to have 150 Programs by 2026. The focus on measurement, standardization of practices, early diagnosis, training the workforce, and strengthening health systems to reflect inclusive policies aligns with the Golisano Foundation's vision and furthers both organization's mutual goal of improving health equity for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Gallagher

Insurance | Risk Management | Consulting

Gallagher is a global insurance brokerage, risk management and consulting services firm. As the official sponsor of Special Olympics International sport and coach programming, Gallagher's support has helped advance the expansion of both athletics and badminton into new regions, the delivery of high-quality coach training and life-changing sport experience to millions of athletes around the world since 2020.

Gallagher sponsors Special Olympics Illinois, Special Olympics Southern California, Special Olympics New York, Special Olympics Australia and Special Olympics Ontario, and holds several major games designations including Supporting Sponsor of Special Olympics 2025 World Games, Platinum Sponsor of Special Olympics 2026 USA Games and Supporting Sponsor of Special Olympics 2027 World Games.

In addition to their generous financial support, Gallagher produces a multi-episode video series each year, focused on the value of coaching, teamwork and leadership on the field, featuring Special Olympics athletes and professional athletes in the Gallagher network. The series highlights stories of fortitude and perseverance that drive many Special Olympics and Gallagher athletes alike, shining a light on Special Olympics inclusion mission.

"Gallagher is so proud of our long-standing partnership with Special Olympics. Seeing our common values shine through the athletes is rewarding for our organization and employees, who find their passion through volunteering with this incredible organization. We are grateful to Special Olympics for the opportunity to be a part of meaningfully changing lives."

-Christopher Mead, Chief Marketing Officer, Gallagher





TOYOTA

Toyota became a global partner of Special Olympics in 2017, building on nearly 30 years of support at the state and national levels in North America and Japan. Since then, Toyota has played a pivotal role in highlighting the untapped potential of Special Olympics athletes, inspiring the public by investing in Unified Sports®, Athlete Leadership, and Unified Leadership initiatives.

Toyota has also sponsored and actively participated in major global events, including the World Games, USA Games, Unified Cups, and National Games. The company renewed its second global partnership for 2023–2025, reaffirming its commitment to advancing the Special Olympics movement.

In 2020, Toyota Motor Europe and Special Olympics Europe Eurasia launched a regional partnership to support grassroots inclusive programming and Unified Sports® events across the region. Since then, national partnerships have emerged as extensions of this initiative in countries such as Germany, Switzerland, and Great Britain, creating more opportunities at the national level. Additionally, Toyota Motor Europe has sponsored the Berlin Games and the Turin 2025 World Winter Games, further championing athletes and promoting inclusion across the region.

Toyota’s mission to provide freedom of movement for everyone aligns seamlessly with Special Olympics’ vision of fostering a more inclusive and connected society.

[Learn more about Toyota Motor Corporation](#)



Since 2017, United has partnered with Special Olympics International and has contributed more than \$8.5M in travel and cash to support Special Olympics athletes globally. In 2024, we celebrated the 5-year anniversary of the Special Olympics Service Ambassador (SOSA) program - our groundbreaking and industry-leading program that enables Special Olympics Athlete Leaders to use their talents and further develop their skills through equitable employment across airports. As part-time employees, Special Olympics athletes welcome United customers to terminals, help them find check-in kiosks, show them where to drop bags and show them how to find TSA PreCheck lines. There are currently 18 SOSAs working at United’s hubs across the U.S., with planned expansion to additional hubs.

United’s long-standing partnership also extends to their sponsorship of Special Olympics Plane Pull competitions, Special Olympics Capitol Hill Day, and volunteer events across the communities they serve. United has been a “Best Place to Work for Disability Inclusion” for eight years in a row and has consistently earned a top score on the Disability Equality Index.





Allison

Allison Worldwide began a multi-year global partnership with Special Olympics in 2022 with a shared purpose of global inclusion and to help further raise awareness of the organization’s mission. The partnership includes regional office volunteer matching opportunities, senior counsel, special event support, public relations, and access to specialized services.

To date, Allison team members from 10 offices have spent more than 500 hours volunteering and collaborating with Special Olympics, including staffing the World Games in Berlin with a dedicated team of volunteers from their Munich office. In 2024, the Allison Latin American team supported the first Special Olympics Latin America Regional Games with media outreach, social posts and press releases. In the U.S., Allison supported a Special Olympics event at the White House and activated volunteers at numerous Special Olympic events from Polar Plunges and Plane Pulls to sports events and health days. In addition to volunteering, Special Olympics athletes visited various Allison Worldwide offices and shared their stories of inclusion.

Allison is a proud global partner of Special Olympics and looks forward to continuing the relationship for years to come, with additional activations and opportunities.



Since 2022, Minute Media has partnered with Special Olympics, leveraging their portfolio of brands and technology platform to bring awareness to Special Olympics’ Games, athletes and initiatives aimed at creating greater inclusion within sport.

In 2024, for the second year in a row, FanSided (Minute Media’s fan-centric sports media brand) leveraged its partnership with Special Olympics to participate in Unified Reporting at Super Bowl Week. Unified Reporting refers to people with and without intellectual disabilities working together side by side in equal roles, in this case, to create content and tell the stories of Super Bowl LVIII. Special Olympics athlete Malcom Harris-Gowdie returned to Super Bowl Media Week and partnered with FanSided Reporter, Sterling Holmes, to take advantage of the ample opportunity for media access to players, coaches, and celebrities.

Throughout the week, Harris-Gowdie and Holmes conducted over 108 interviews, resulting in the creation of over 60+ articles and over 400+ short form videos which garnered over 60M+ views and 23 hours of live streamed content which garnered over 500,000+ minutes watched. Harris-Gowdie also attended the NFL Honors Red Carpet capturing on-the-ground content with the FanSided video team.

In addition to the Unified Reporting initiative, Minute Media also held a Unified Leadership Session facilitated by Special Olympics. The session focused on breaking down barriers and fostering inclusion for individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID). It aimed to challenge negative attitudes, unlock opportunities, and empower participants with practical strategies for creating inclusive workplaces and communities. Through interactive activities, personal reflection, and collaborative problem-solving, 65 participants gained valuable tools to promote unity and ensure individuals with ID can thrive in supportive environments.





Dr. Dave Fabry (left), Starkey's Chief Hearing Health Officer, shakes the hand of Special Olympics Brazil athlete, Marcelino Lages (right), as he reacts to being able to hear properly for the first time.

Photo credit: Starkey



Starkey Cares served as the official global partner of the Special Olympics Healthy Athletes® Healthy Hearing program and exclusive provider of hearing instrumentation and care for Special Olympics athletes from 2022 to 2024. Throughout the partnership, Starkey Cares and Special Olympics collaborated to offer advanced screening protocols and hearing aid fittings, ensuring a comprehensive and high-quality approach to the hearing health of athletes and significantly impacting the lives of the many athletes that received the gift of hearing through Starkey Cares' support.

Partnership efforts in 2024 prioritized the continued service of US-based Special Olympics athletes through direct referrals to local Starkey Cares providers in their home communities, where athletes could receive both care and hearing aids at no cost. Program-level collaborations also continued in the Middle East North Africa region, resulting in free fittings of hearing aids for athletes in Morocco and the United Arab Emirates. Additionally, the partnership marked a significant milestone in 2024, with its first Major Games activation in Latin America. At the Special Olympics IV Latin American Games in Asunción, Paraguay, 784 athletes were screened in the Healthy Hearing program, and Starkey Cares supported 229 athletes with ear wax removal and nearly 100 athletes with new hearing aids. Special Olympics is grateful for the partnership with Starkey Cares and its enduring impact on the hearing health and care access of Special Olympics athletes.



Kim Samuel, Special Olympics Board Member, and the Samuel Family Foundation have provided long-term strategic support to Special Olympics programs across several key disciplines, including sibling and family engagement, Unified Champion Schools®, and athlete advocacy programming. As pioneers in the fields of inclusion, belonging, and social connectedness, Kim Samuel and the Samuel Family Foundation remain important partners in Special Olympics' work to ensure people with intellectual disabilities feel a sense of belonging and inclusion in their communities. Through our partnership, the Samuel Family Foundation helped Special Olympics launch the first-ever Sibling Engagement initiative, evolving our families work and creating targeted opportunities specifically for siblings of Special Olympics athletes. Building on this success, Special Olympics has implemented a global family strategy that engages, educates, and empowers family members to be teachers of inclusion and strong advocates for their family member. Additionally, the Foundation invests in the necessary research and evaluation to ensure success of program design and sustainability, as well as necessary financial resources and technical support to empower young people to create inclusion in their communities.

Special Olympics is grateful to Ms. Samuel and the Samuel Family Foundation for their commitment to Special Olympics and shared our message to show the world what our athletes are truly capable of.

[Learn more about The Samuel Family Foundation.](#)





IIN / SNF

ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΣΤΑΥΡΟΣ ΝΙΑΡΧΟΣ
STAVROS NIARCHOS FOUNDATION

2024 marked a historic year of growth for the Special Olympics-Stavros Niarchos Foundation Global Campaign for Inclusion. In 21 nations worldwide, the partnership executed important expansion of the Special Olympics Unified Schools programming, empowering youth with and without intellectual disabilities through the Play Unified: Learn Unified platform.

The partnership focused its efforts on strengthening its shared commitment of inclusive sports in over 2,200 schools and impacting over 500,000 young people both with and without IDD, positioning them to be leaders for inclusion in their schools and communities.

Special Olympics also issued important thought leadership work, engaging new audiences and propelling forward the urgent message of inclusion and the acceptance of differences in a variety of conferences, think tanks, forums and publications, including in prestigious institutions such as the Brookings Institution, Global Partnership for Education (GPE), and the Special Olympics Global Center for Inclusion in Education in Abu Dhabi. In addition, Special Olympics was invited to participate in the first ever G7 Ministerial Conference on Inclusion and Disability, opening new avenues for discussion, political collaboration, and support. The Special Olympics Global Coalition for Inclusion, a multilateral platform made possible by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, saw remarkable growth.

Through the direct engagement and partnership development with national governments around the world, the Global Coalition for Inclusion welcomed 17 nations, including Kosovo, Iceland, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Malta, Paraguay and more, representing over \$15M of financing to the expansion of Special Olympics Unified Sports and Unified Schools programming.

with support of

HIS HIGHNESS SHEIKH
MOHAMMED BIN ZAYED AL NAHYAN

Collaborations with esteemed institutions include co-hosting a global symposium on inclusive education systems with the Brookings Institution and the Global Partnership for Education, as well as convening experts at NYU Abu Dhabi to explore the potential of AI for learners with disabilities.

Thanks to the generosity and vision of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, the Special Olympics Global Center for Inclusion in Education continues to advance inclusive education worldwide. Serving as a hub for thought leadership in inclusive education research, policy, and programming, the Center has made significant strides over the past year.

The six foundational country programs—Special Olympics Argentina, Bharat, Egypt, Pakistan, Romania, and Rwanda—have achieved “Regional Hub of Excellence” status, recognizing their exceptional Unified Champion Schools® (UCS) programming. These hubs have helped exceed expansion targets, scaling UCS to 25 countries.

A groundbreaking global research agenda focused on developing inclusive mindsets and behaviors is being leveraged across all Special Olympics strategic areas, while evaluations of the UCS model are fostering knowledge-sharing and driving program enhancements worldwide.

The Center continues to support an impressive body of Thought Leadership publications, including recent briefs addressing the Economic Argument for Inclusive Education and Unified Champion Schools® as a Catalyst to Systems Change in Inclusive Education. Collaborations with prestigious institutions include hosting a global symposium on inclusive education systems with the Brookings Institution and Global Partnership for Education as well as a convening with experts at NYU Abu Dhabi to explore AI’s potential for learners with disabilities. The Center’s first-ever research advisory, bridging global and local research institutions, is releasing a forward-thinking agenda in early 2025.





The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) supports health initiatives that are dedicated to improving the health and quality of life for people with disabilities. By fostering partnerships among public health entities, healthcare providers, and community organizations, these initiatives strive to create inclusive health environments that include the unique needs of individuals with disabilities.

In 2021, the CDC and Special Olympics entered into a 5-year cooperative agreement, funded by the CDC. This cooperative agreement supports numerous health initiatives covering all stages of life for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (PwIDD) such as:

- Healthy Athletes® program that facilitates health screenings, referrals, and follow-up care to all ages
- Young Athletes program that focuses on the younger generation to enhance familial knowledge of disabilities and increase fitness and educational programming in schools
- Health promotion and education for all to include current health professionals, and next generation training for medical students with an emphasis on PwIDD included in the trainings
- Expanding access to care with education, knowledge and community-based partnerships
- Developing one of the largest data sets nationwide with consent and participation of PwIDD to better analyze persistent health inequalities and effective interventions

The CDC and Special Olympics' partnership continue to enhance inclusive health on a national level encouraging medical professionals, communities, professional associations, educational institutions, and public health organizations to question antiquated, healthcare norms to become champions and institutions of inclusion.

The mark "CDC" is owned by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and is used with permission. Use of this logo is not an endorsement by HHS or CDC of any particular product, service, or enterprise. Special Olympics Health activities are supported by many sources, including in the United States by Grant Number NU27DD000021 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, with \$18.1 M (64%) financed with U.S. Federal funds and \$10.2 M (36%) supported by nonfederal sources.



The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) at the U.S. Department of Education has supported Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools® programming in creating communities of inclusion and shaping attitudes on school campuses across the United States, reaching more than 10,000 schools in 2024. Through the generous grant support of the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs, K-12 schools and colleges across the United States have been activated as communities of respect and inclusion. With a focus on Special Olympics Unified Sports®, inclusive youth leadership, and whole school engagement activities, students with and without IDD at every grade level become agents of change, build friendships, and develop an inclusive mindset that will change communities around the world for generations to come.

[Learn more about The Office of Special Education Programs of the U.S. Department of Education.](#)





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The Shriver Society recognizes a group of supporters distinguished by their significant contribution over the past year. These individuals are bringing hope and promise to the lives of our athletes across the globe and upholding the incredible legacy of the Shriver family.

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Johnny Weir
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The Champion's Society®

We are grateful for the loyal donors who passed away in 2023 but whose legacy and generosity will live on through the gifts they left in their estate plan.

Anonymous (1)
Estate of Adele Argelli
Estate of Shawn Barrett
Estate of Joe Follis Bennett
Estate of James Bridges
Estate of Claire Dennis
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Estate of Sharon M. Smith
Estate of Stephen Sweetland

* Indicates Shriver Society Co-Founder.
** Indicates Shriver Society Founding Members.

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Special Olympics is grateful for the support of a select group of acclaimed athletes and celebrities who are dedicated to expanding the Special Olympics movement worldwide.

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Olympic Swimmer, Commander of the Order of Distinction

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NBA All-Star & Rebound Champion, Philadelphia 76ers

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Actor

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DALTON RISNER

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DEVIN BOOKER

NBA All-Star, Phoenix Suns

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2x MLB All-Star, New York Yankees Shortstop

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Olympic Champion, Snowboarding

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Former Professional Tennis Player, two time Grand Slam Champion, The first Chinese member of the ITF

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ZHOU XUN

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ZOU SHIMING

Olympic Champion, Boxing

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CAFU

(MARCOS EVANGELISTA DE MORAIS)

Legendary Professional Soccer Player

HER SERENE HIGHNESS PRINCESS CHARLENE OF MONACO

Olympian & World Champion Swimmer

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Grammy Award Winning Singer & Songwriter

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Olympic Champion, Figure Skating

YUNA KIM

Olympic Champion, Figure Skating

2024 SPECIAL OLYMPICS

NATIONAL AND STATE PROGRAMS

AFRICA

Angola
Benin
Botswana
Burkina Faso
Burundi
Cameroon
Cape Verde
Chad
Congo Brazzaville
Cote D'Ivoire
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Equatorial Guinea
Eswatini
Ethiopia
Ghana
Guinea
Guinea Bissau
Kenya
Lesotho
Liberia
Madagascar
Malawi
Mali
Mauritius
Mozambique
Namibia
Niger
Nigeria
Rwanda
Senegal
Seychelles
Sierra Leone
Somalia
South Africa
South Sudan
Tanzania
The Gambia
Togo
Uganda
Zambia
Zimbabwe

Maldives
Marshall Islands
Micronesia
Myanmar
Nauru
New Zealand
Nippon (Japan)
Pakistan
Palau
Papua New Guinea
Pilipinas
Samoa
Singapore
Solomon Islands
Thailand
Timor-Leste
Vietnam

EAST ASIA

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Chinese Taipei
Hong Kong
Korea
Macau
Mongolia

EUROPE EURASIA

Albania
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Armenia
Austria
Azerbaijan
Belgium
Bosnia & Herzegovina
Bulgaria
Croatia
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Denmark
Estonia
Faroe Islands
Finland
France
Georgia Republic
Germany
Gibraltar
Great Britian
Hellas (Greece)
Hungary
Iceland
Ireland
Isle of Man
Israel
Italy
Kazakhstan

Kosovo
Kyrgyz Republic
Latvia
Liechtenstein
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Malta
Moldova
Monaco
Montenegro
Netherlands
North Macedonia
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Romania
San Marino
Serbia
Slovakia
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Tajikistan
Turkiye
Turkmenistan
Ukraine
Uzbekistan

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Bolivia
Brazil
Chile
Colombia
Costa Rica
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
El Salvador
Guatemala
Honduras
Mexico
Nicaragua
Paraguay
Puerto Rico
Uruguay
Venezuela

MIDDLE EAST/ NORTH AFRICA

Algeria
Bahrain
Egypt
Iraq
Jordan

Kuwait
Lebanon
Mauritania
Morocco
Oman
Saudi Arabia
United Arab Emirates

NORTH AMERICA

Alabama
Alaska
Arizona
Arkansas
Colorado
Connecticut
Delaware
District of Columbia
Florida
Georgia
Hawaii
Idaho
Illinois
Indiana
Iowa
Kansas
Kentucky
Louisiana
Maine
Maryland
Massachusetts
Michigan
Minnesota
Mississippi
Missouri
Montana
Nebraska
New Hampshire
New Jersey
New Mexico
New York
Nevada
North Carolina
North Dakota
Northern California
Ohio
Oklahoma
Oregon
Pennsylvania
Rhode Island
South Carolina
South Dakota
Southern California
Tennessee
Texas
Utah
Vermont

Virginia
Washington
West Virginia
Wisconsin
Wyoming

Aruba
Bahamas
Belize
Bermuda
Bonaire
Canada
Cayman Island
Curacao
Dominica
Guadeloupe
Guyana
Haiti
Jamaica
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St. Lucia
St. Maarten
Suriname
Trinidad and Tobago

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Includes members who served at any time between January 1, 2024 and December 31, 2024

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Mr. Stephen Borrelli
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Dr. Dimitri Christakis
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Ms. Loretta Claiborne
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2024-2027 GLOBAL ATHLETE LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

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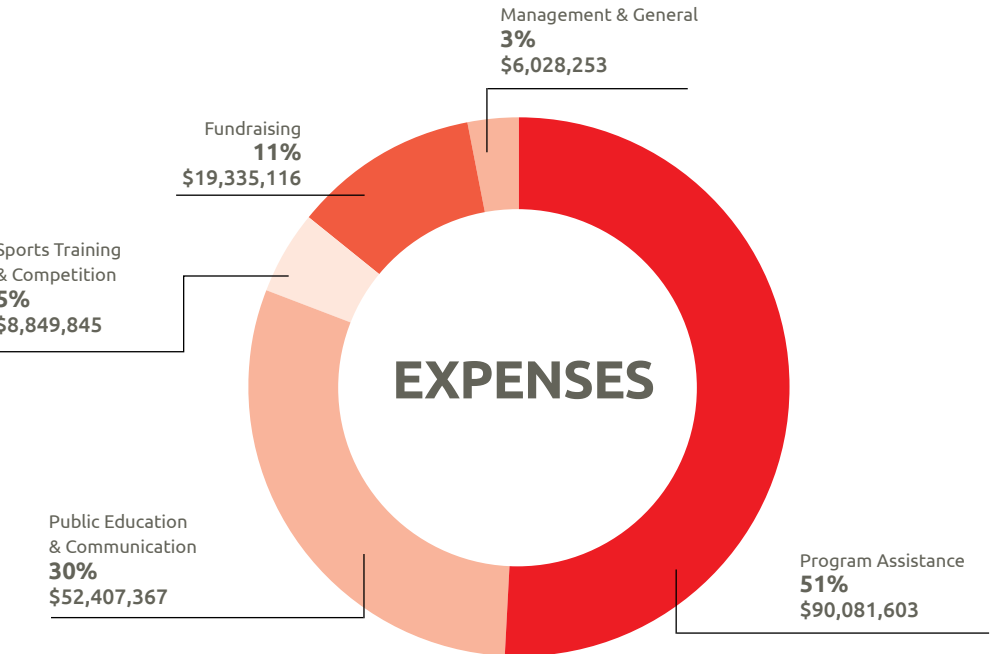
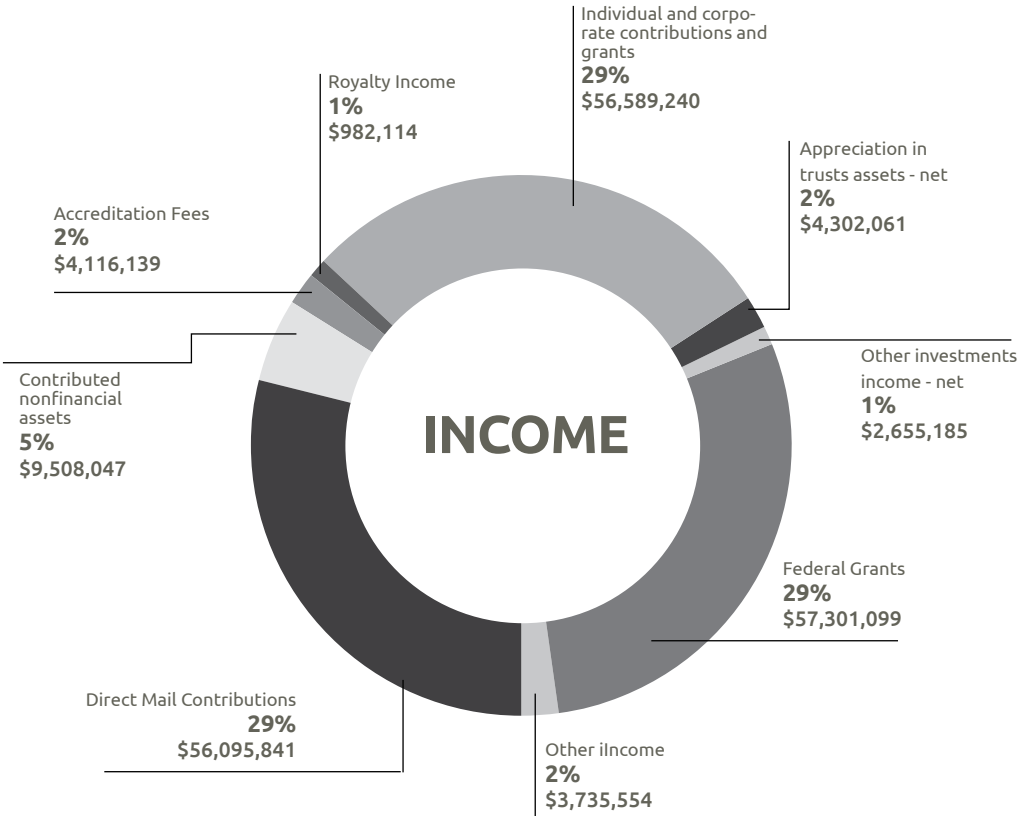
Mr. Hay Qing
Special Olympics Singapore

Special Olympics Inc. and Affiliates

2024 FINANCIALS

Combined Statement of Activities for the Year Ended December 31, 2024

	WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS	WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS	FY 2024 TOTAL	FY 2023 TOTAL
REVENUES, GAINS & OTHER SUPPORT				
Direct mail contributions	\$ 56,095,841		\$ 56,095,841	\$ 54,485,071
Individual and corporate contributions and grants	9,151,768	\$ 47,437,472	56,589,240	39,548,217
Federal grants	57,301,099		57,301,099	47,823,459
Contributed nonfinancial assets	9,508,047		9,508,047	12,293,948
Accreditation fees	4,116,139		4,116,139	4,051,290
Royalty income	982,114		982,114	892,336
Appreciation in trust assets - net	4,302,061		4,302,061	3,829,951
Other investment income - net	2,655,185		2,655,185	2,051,474
Other income	3,735,554		3,735,554	1,117,959
Total revenues, gains and other support	\$147,847,808	\$47,437,472	\$195,285,280	\$166,093,705
NET ASSETS RELEASED FROM RESTRICTIONS				
Satisfaction of program restrictions	26,484,205	-26,484,205		
Expiration of time restrictions	8,384,597	-8,384,597		
Total revenues, gains and other support and net assets released from restrictions	\$182,716,610	\$12,568,670	\$195,285,280	\$166,093,705
EXPENSES				
Program assistance	90,081,603		90,081,603	90,336,622
Public education and communications	52,407,367		52,407,367	46,693,135
Sports training and competitions	8,849,845		8,849,845	9,821,702
Fundraising	19,335,116		19,335,116	18,895,302
Management and general	6,028,253		6,028,253	7,280,119
Total expenses	\$176,702,184		\$176,702,184	\$173,026,880
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS				
Net assets (beginning of year)	85,125,292	36,056,192	121,181,484	128,114,659
Changes in net assets	6,014,426	12,568,670	18,583,096	-6,933,175
Net assets (end of year)	\$91,139,718	\$48,624,862	\$139,764,580	\$121,181,484



ASSETS & LIABILITIES

	2024	2023
ASSETS		
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash & cash equivalents	\$ 37,321,891	\$ 43,101,606
Contributions & accounts receivable	17,947,767	21,159,560
Investments in Liquidation		
Other current assets	3,412,692	3,402,057
Total current assets	\$58,682,350	\$67,663,223
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Investments	81,308,590	70,661,324
Long-term contributions receivable - net	17,762,100	5,519,899
Fixed assets - net	6,895,662	7,589,428
Other assets	779,224	761,120
Total non-current assets	\$106,745,576	\$84,531,771
TOTAL	\$165,427,926	\$152,194,994
LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable & accrued liabilities	11,838,711	15,828,963
Grants & awards payable	35,938	163,299
Deferred liabilities	9,386,644	9,644,599
Total current liabilities	\$21,261,293	\$25,636,861
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Lease liability, net	4,402,053	5,376,649
Total liabilities	\$25,663,346	\$31,013,510
NET ASSETS		
Without donor restrictions	91,139,718	85,125,292
With donor restrictions	48,624,862	36,056,192
Total net assets	\$139,764,580	\$121,181,484
TOTAL	\$165,427,926	\$152,194,994

OUR MISSION

Special Olympics provides 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.

SpecialOlympics.org

