**Novie Craven** (00:00:02)

Howdy y'all, my name is Novie Craven. You're on the road with the Inclusion Revolution Radio podcast. We're at the Special Olympics Texas Summer Games in Melissa, Texas. This event is all about friendship, inclusion and the spirit of Special Olympics. Special Olympics Texas Summer Games are powered by Toyota. Since 2017, Special Olympics has partnered with Toyota. Our partnership with Toyota has been fantastical. Saddle up, we've got incredible stories, special guests and Texas inspiration coming your way. Let's get started.

Toyota is a proud sponsor of Special Olympics. They drive our mission of inclusion forward. Toyota's North America headquarters are close by in Plano, Texas. So, they are close to all the action of the Special Olympics Texas Summer Games. First up, we're meeting with two members of Toyota’s staff who are volunteering for the weekend.

**Novie Craven** (00:54:22)

Hello, I'm Novie Craven. I'm the host of the Inclusion Revolution Radio podcast.

**Michaela Sears** (00:59:08)

Hi Novie, I'm Michaela Sears. I work at Toyota as a Senior Analyst for Community Development in our Sustainable Development Division.

**Novie Craven** (01:07:21)

What is your role at Toyota and how has your work, especially your leadership with ToyotAbility, inspired you to become a champion for inclusion in the workplace?

**Michaela Sears** (01:19:19)

Great question. So, I currently serve as a Senior Analyst for Community Development and I love what I do, and I have the opportunity of serving as the chair for ToyotAbility. And really, ToyotAbility was an opportunity for me to marry my old world and my new world, because I used to serve as a job developer back in the day, working with students with disabilities and helping them find employment. And now I get to do that with ToyotAbility as well as with Toyota in terms of promoting disability inclusion, advocacy, allyship, and it has been such a joy and a huge highlight of my career.

**Novie Craven** (02:02:07)

As the chair of ToyotAbility, you helped launch Toyota's first Disability Pride Month. What did that milestone mean to you personally, and what kind of an impact did it have on employees across the company?

**Michaela Sears** (02:19:09)

Launching Disability Pride Month at Toyota has been a very momentous experience as well as a very meaningful, personally meaningful experience as well. Living with invisible disabilities myself, I know that this population tends to be sometimes invisible and so this is our opportunity to

raise awareness, put the spotlight on, but not only that, to create an opportunity to celebrate the unique abilities that everybody brings to the table. And that's something that's really special and something that we do really well with ToyotAbility as well as just overall at Toyota. Respect for people is something that's incredibly important. It's one of our top values and being able to celebrate each other's differences as well as being able to come together and build community.

That's what Disability Pride Month is all about. And we have had tremendous and positive impact where in the last two years, we've had on average around 250 team members participate in our Disability Pride Month events. And they want more and more and more.

**Novie Craven** (03:29:05)

Toyota talks a lot about mobility for all. What does that mean to you personally? And how do you see that value come to life through Special Olympics?

**Michaela Sears** (03:40:12)

Mobility for all is really, really important. I think a lot of people tend to think about the physical mobility, but to me, it's more about creating access to opportunity. That's really what it is. Whether you're physically moving across the room or town, or whether you are investing in your own skills and developing social skills or financial education.

All of those components all add up to your social mobility. And so that's really why I think that Mobility for All is really truly about access to opportunity. So, access to opportunity, as it relates to Special Olympics, you all absolutely embody that.

**Novie Craven** (04:27:05)

Thank you.

**Michaela Sears** (04:27:19)

You are creating opportunity for so many athletes that maybe wouldn't have opportunity. You're creating this culture of friendship and inclusion and support and you're cheerleading each other on. It's so beautiful and I think it's a really good model for the rest of the world. And you all truly, again, are creating that opportunity that would maybe not exist. That's what it's all about. That's what Mobility for All is.

**Novie Craven** (04:58:15)

Just to see how much the impact of Special Olympics means to not just me, but everybody around the world.

Why is volunteering at Special Olympics Texas Summer Games important to you? And how does it connect to Toyota's commitment to inclusion and community engagement?

**Michaela Sears** (05:18:02)

Firstly, I have to really emphasize how incredibly excited our team members are, were, are when the announcement that the Summer Games was coming to Melissa, Texas, because that's our backyard. And we just immediately saw opportunity to get involved and that we've always wanted — the Summer Games — and now we have the opportunity to really show up. And so today, we have about 100 volunteers with us, and we look forward to getting more and more people involved. I was already talking to volunteers earlier today who are asking about more opportunities with Special Olympics and that's exactly what we want to see because when you volunteer with Special Olympics, that Unified Sports mentality and model really has direct impact on people's lives. I'm able to watch our volunteers smile as they're interacting with the athletes, feeling such a sense of pride. And they want more and more and more of that because they understand the specialness of this culture.

And again, that culture can really teach us a lot about how to interact with each other, how to work alongside each other, how to celebrate each other's differences. And that's what the volunteer component offers our team members. And I just think it's truly priceless.

**Novie Craven** (06:42:01)

Because the volunteers are volunteering their day, their time to not only to be with you, but also build a relationship and friendship. Toyota has really, really not just helped me but other athletes around the world.

Why do you think Toyota's partnership with Special Olympics Texas is so important for both the athletes and the employees who volunteer?

**Michaela Sears** (07:05:08)

That opportunity to interact with one another, it's a reciprocal relationship. The athlete's walking away with something special as well as the volunteer. Having just that same moment in time together, that is truly everlasting.

**Novie Craven** (07:20:07)

Well said. Well said, thank you so much, I cannot say thank you enough.

Next up, we are meeting with another volunteer representative with Toyota North America.

**Krystal Winfield** (07:33:12)

Nice to meet you, Novie. I'm Krystal Winfield. I'm with Toyota Financial Services.

**Novie Craven** (07:36:21)

Nice to meet you. Thank you for being here today.

**Krystal Winfield** (07:39:05)

Thanks for inviting me.

**Novie Craven** (07:40:13)

What is your role at Toyota and how has your work inspired you to become a champion for inclusion in the workplace?

**Krystal Winfield** (07:49:04)

My role is a Senior Supplier Relationship Analyst. I oversee the outsourcing of call centers. I actually have a call center in Pampanga, Philippines, and I also have one in Houston, Texas.

One thing that's inspired me to be a champion for inclusion is that some of my suppliers offer 100% remote jobs working from home. And I think that's a wonderful way of showing how the company is inclusive to everyone to have the opportunity to work within the call center.

**Novie Craven** (08:19:22)

Toyota's programs like ToyotAbility show that involvement is about people, not just technology. How have you seen that focus on accessibility and inclusion come to life in your own experience at Toyota?

**Krystal Winfield** (08:36:08)

The company is very inclusive. One way that I've seen it present at the workplace, at headquarters, if there's ever a situation where someone is having a mobility issue, they might need adjustments to the building for accommodations, the company jumps on it right away to make sure everyone has the ability to maneuver throughout the campus with ease.

**Novie Craven** (08:57:16)

What have you learned from being a part of this event that you will take back to work at Toyota?

**Krystal Winfield** (09:05:05)

One thing I've learned is that everyone is very energetic about volunteering with the athletes at Special Olympics. When we set out a goal for only 75 volunteers, we had to add additional slots because within a couple of days, we had people join on the waitlist, because everyone wanted to participate. It has brought so much energy and excitement to the employees at Toyota.

**Novie Craven** (09:27:11)

With Toyota supporting what sets to be the largest Special Olympics Summer Games ever held in Texas, why is it so important for companies to sponsor events like this?

**Krystal Winfield** (09:38:00)

I think it's very important because it's a positive component in the community.

And I think it really, really does boost engagement because you like to work for a company that's doing good and improving lives, especially Toyota, because we're a mobility company. And so, it's even more valuable for us.

**Novie Craven** (09:55:12)

What does inclusion mean to you?

**Krystal Winfield** (09:57:16)

It means everybody's invited to the party and everybody gets to have a great time while they're there.

**Novie Craven** (10:04:23)

Before Opening Ceremonies, we're going to catch up with the Special Olympics Texas staff. Here we go!

**Novie Craven** (10:12:23)

Hello, nice to meet you. I'm Novie Craven and I host the Inclusion Revolution Radio podcast.

**Tammy Hortenstine** (10:17:09)

I am Tammy Hortenstine, Executive Director of Unified Programs, Special Olympics Texas.

**Novie Craven** (10:21:13)

Thanks so much for having us.

**Tammy Hortenstine** (10:22:10)

Absolutely.

**Novie Craven** (10:23:04)

So, what is your role at Special Olympics?

**Tammy Hortenstine** (10:25:09)

So, I'm the Executive Director of Unified Programs, so I get to work with the whole state of Texas, all of our Unified Champion Schools and all of our Unified programming.

**Novie Craven** (10:33:03)

That is truly amazing.

**Tammy Hortenstine** (10:33:20)

I have the best job.

**Novie Craven** (10:34:16)

What is the most important part of the job?

**Tammy Hortenstine** (10:37:06)

Bringing all types together on the same playing field as well as at the same leadership opportunities. So not just looking at our athletes, also looking at our partners and bringing everybody together on the same field, but not everybody plays sports. So, we also want to focus on what they're doing as far as leadership or community involvement and stuff like that.

**Novie Craven** (10:58:21)

What are you most excited about Games?

**Tammy Hortenstine** (11:01:02)

So, we have a lot of teams that have come in that have never got to come to Summer Games. I'm really excited because this is the first time that we're having it in Melissa.

And this school district has come together. Also, what it's going to do moving forward from here because we're building relationships today.

**Novie Craven** (11:19:00)

I'm really excited to walk in with other athletes because I get to just have fun. Because, you know, being around other athletes, it's truly amazing when you don't get to know them, but you get to know them in a short amount of time. And I think you can definitely have a long, long, good friendship with them.

**Novie Craven** (11:36:00)

At the Opening Ceremony Guest Reception, we are introduced to some important members of the Special Olympics Texas team, including Bruce.

**Bruce Clark** (11:45:00)

My name is Bruce Clark. I am an athlete and I'm also a staff member with Special Olympic Texas. I oversee our Athlete Leadership Program. I actually started out as an intern with Special Olympics Arizona in June of 2012 after I graduated from college. Tim Martin was the CEO in Arizona at that time, and I followed him out here to Texas in 2019. And that's what excites me about my job is I get to allow our other athletes to have their voice and to make their voice heard. Inclusion means being a part of society and having those lifelong friendships.

Like when we talk about Unified Champion Schools, how the athletes and the Unified partners build those lifelong relationships with each other.

**Novie Craven** (12:49:04)

Let's hear from the Special Olympics Texas Board of Directors.

**Pete Carey** (12:52:22)

My name is Pete Carey. I am the Chairman of the Board for Special Olympics for the state of Texas. I was a banker for 30 years with Toyota and now I spend my time supporting this organization and I build wheelchair ramps for people that are homebound. Yeah, so my first involvement with special needs people in general was I was a neighbor of somebody that was profoundly disabled. You know, when you're a young person, you don't know enough to be an advocate and to be a champion for that person.

And as I reflect, as I got older, I realized that, you know, the real challenges, the everyday challenges that that young man, Kevin Bordas, experienced that I didn't do enough then. And so, as I became an executive at Toyota, there was an opportunity for me to be the executive sponsor of Special Olympics on behalf of Toyota. And it literally changed my perspective on life.

And I found, I think I re-found the innocence and the love and the joy that the athletes experience. And I've been with Special Olympics now for 15 years in multiple states. And it is truly one of the blessings that I have in my life.

I didn't know that Special Olympics included medical screenings and that some of that medical evaluation would be the only evaluation that some of our athletes received.

So, I've got a very specific story that was literally transformational. When we brought the World Games to Los Angeles, we had an athlete, his name was Dustin, and he went through screening, and it was determined that he had cancer in his gums. And thankfully we had a doctor that raised his hand and said, I'm going to take care of that, I'm going to remediate that for you, and he did. Dustin went on to become a Global Messenger and tell the story of how Special Olympics not only provided him with his friends, but it saved his life. It became such a compelling story and such a well-known story that ESPN actually found out about it. And they spotlighted him, and they actually hired him to be a correspondent during the World Games that we had in Los Angeles. And to me, it really encapsulates what Special Olympics is, right?

It's not just the Summer Games that happen once a year. It's a holistic program that's designed to really provide a meaningful life for those that don't have a level playing field. So, I think Unified Sports has been wonderful because, you know, a common denominator is everybody needs to go to school. And, you know, I think back to seven years ago, when I first started here in Texas, we only had a handful of schools that were participating and now we have nearly a thousand.

You know, I've seen some of the Unified partners that were involved at the high school level now move into the universities across the United States. And they've come back to us and said, hey, we don't have a program at the college level. How come? And so, we've started now to really lay that program into the universities. And that's very heartwarming to me. I'd like every school in the United States to be a Unified Champion School.

Quite frankly, you know, being in one of the largest states in the United States, there's probably twice as many athletes that we could serve and I want to make that happen.

**Novie Craven** (16:17:16)

Families are our greatest cheerleaders. This weekend, parents are on the sidelines supporting their athletes on the field of play.

**Jacob Forbes** (16:25:10)

The biggest thing, my daughter Lucy, she's homeschooled and she doesn't have much of an outlet for social activity. And by participating in the Special Olympics, the number one thing that she's getting is a social interaction.

And she has some speech delays, and this gives her an opportunity to practice her speech and to interact socially with people that is completely non-judgmental. They accept her for who she is, and they just love seeing her and they love having her there being a part of their activities. What are you waiting for? What are you waiting for? This is amazing. Everybody needs something to look forward to and Lucy looks forward to practice, I don't have to remind her. She comes and gets me and says, Dad, it's time to go. We got to go power lift now. Let's go. Let's go to the track. Let's go do this. This is driven by her.

**Novie Craven** (17:19:12)

We've got a lot more to learn about the sponsors and the people that make weekends like this possible. Let's pass the mic back to another Special Olympics Texas staff member. Dalton Hill is amazing. I just met him. What do you do work wise?

**Dalton Hill** (17:37:08)

So, work-wise, I have been with Special Olympics for over 10 years, starting in programs with competitions and coach trainings and getting new teams set up and schools signed on to participate in our programs from all the different sports that we offer, Unified Champion Schools. And that's kind how I started within Special Olympics. And then from that role, moved into a more development corporate partner role, building relationships with companies, trying to get them involved with our mission and our organization as well, which has been really fun to see.

We're going to get to see some of those partners today like Toyota and some others, which is really cool. Quick story. My favorite sport that I even know was a sport until I got to Special Olympics over 10 years ago was, I was in an interview and we were talking about all the different sports that Special Olympics Texas offered at the time and they were going through the whole list and they said bocce, and I had to ask in the interview and I said, I go what's bocce?

**Novie Craven** (18:35:00)

Okay this is the same thing.

**Dalton Hill** (18:35:20)

I didn't even know what it was.

**Novie Craven** (18:36:17)

I didn't know anything either before Special Olympics. It was my first sport and then in 2018, I went to USA Games in Seattle participating in bocce. Came home with some…

**Dalton Hill** (18:47:00)

Oh, with some hardware?

**Novie Craven** (18:48:09)

Yes, but I was like knew…

**Dalton Hill** (18:49:18)

You didn't even know anything about bocce then you get to go compete in national Games?

**Novie Craven** (18:53:11)

Yes, correct.

**Dalton Hill** (18:54:10)

And you got a medal?

**Novie Craven** (18:55:09)

Yes.

**Dalton Hill** (18:55:23)

Okay, boy, that's awesome.

**Novie Craven** (18:57:17)

I know.

**Dalton Hill** (18:58:00)

Congrats to you.

**Novie Craven** (18:58:20)

Thank you, thank you. Having Special Olympics and part of me is because I have intellectual disabilities and I always, sometimes in high school I used to get bullied. When I started Special Olympics, it was just the way for a place where I can just be myself and where people don't put people down.

**Dalton Hill** (19:17:10)

Yeah, honestly, some of the relationships I've built with Special Olympics athletes are some of closer relationships that I have in my life. Talking about true friends and meaningful relationships through Unified because of Special Olympics. Absolutely. I mean, that's whole point. That's why we're here, right? To build relationships and build friendships.

**Novie Craven** (19:35:09)

This is how it is, folks. Definitely being able to talk to not only this amazing, wonderful Dalton. It's truly amazing to see how...

**Dalton Hill** (19:46:01)

Novie’s amazing.

**Novie Craven** (19:46:22)

It was friendship.

**Dalton Hill** (19:47:06)

I'm not that amazing…

**Novie Craven** (19:47:22)

I just built with him. It's going to be a lifetime. Amazing. Amazing lifetime and beyond. So, I'm excited for this, but definitely, this is one of stops for the Inclusion Revolution.

**Novie Craven** (20:02:14)

Time to check out FUNdamental Sports, a program designed for athletes aged 2 and up who are developing basic motor skills to get ready for the future of Special Olympics competitions. With the support from Toyota, athletes and families have the opportunity to participate in programs like this.

**Alma Villaseñor** (20:21:04)

My name is Alma, my son is Jesus. We met the officer here in FUNdamental Sports and he has helped my son to do sports.

**Julio Flores** (20:33:01)

This is our third year, and we've been partners ever since in this Unified movement. We always win gold medals. Pure gold, right? Only gold medals for us. This is really my best friend out here.

But Jesus does more sports apart from FUNdamental Sports, right?

**Alma Villaseñor** (20:50:02)

Yes. Basketball, soccer, tennis and he likes it so much. That's why I always try to bring him, to motivate him to continue playing. What is your favorite sport?

**Jesus Solorio Villaseñor** (21:07:07)

Basketball.

**Alma Villaseñor** (21:08:11)

Why do you like basketball?

**Jesus Solorio Villaseñor** (21:10:11)

Because it’s my favorite.

**Julio Flores** (21:14:13)

In FUNdamental Sports, he’s a champ at basketball. Right?

**Jesus Solorio Villaseñor** (21:18:00)

Yes.

**Alma Villaseñor** (21:19:08)

For us, the truth is that I’m so grateful and happy to bring my son here. Because I think it has helped him so much, physically and emotionally. I feel like I have learned a lot being with other children who are like him. And I just feel so happy and thankful, and proud of my son.

The truth is that it’s very important. It’s difficult when kids have something that is different and the whole world looks at them differently. And for me, it’s very important that we include them.

**Jesus Solorio Villaseñor** (22:02:08)

I feel happy.

**Julio Flores** (22:04:12)

I don't want anyone on the sidelines watching. I want everybody on the field in some way, shape or form. So, for me, I think inclusion and Unified, it's just going to get bigger, and I hope it keeps growing.

You can do everything, right?

**Novie Craven** (22:21:12)

Let's learn about some of the activities included in FUNdamental Sports, like adaptive basketball.

**Novie Craven** (22:31:22)

Hello, I'm Novie. I'm the host of the Inclusion Revolution Radio podcast.

**Lexi Holmes** (22:34:20)

I'm Lexi, nice to meet you. I'm from Lutheran High School in San Antonio.

**Novie Craven** (22:38:19)

How did you get involved with Special Olympics?

**Lexi Holmes** (22:40:13)

I got involved my freshman year. I did something called Kinetic Kids, which is our robotics special needs team that we mentor. And then our robotics team from there kind of built this whole machine and we built more as we went through.

**Novie Craven** (22:53:07)

Tell me how you built this.

**Lexi Holmes** (22:56:13)

So, our idea came from, we all are in basketball, we're all involved and so…

**Novie Craven** (23:02:06)

You play?

**Lexi Holmes** (23:02:22)

Yes, I do play. Do you?

**Novie Craven** (23:05:06)

Yes.

**Lexi Holmes** (23:05:20)

Yes, that's awesome. What are you?

**Novie Craven** (23:07:17)

Three-point shooter.

**Lexi Holmes** (23:08:08)

I'm a post. But anyway, so we all play basketball, and we wanted to build a machine that if they came up and they had a wheelchair or were inaccessible to play, like run and play, we wanted to build one that they could shoot a free throw or three-point.

And so, we actually paired with Toyota and they gave us a car battery.

**Novie Craven** (23:27:19)

Yes!

**Lexi Holmes** (23:28:09)

Yes, this platform gets pushed up and the ball goes through and it'll go through the wheels… There's a demonstration, but it'll go through the wheels and it'll shoot like you just saw.

**Novie Craven** (23:44:00)

Okay.

**Lexi Holmes** (23:44:09)

But yes.

**Novie Craven** (23:45:06)

Amazing.

**Lexi Holmes** (23:46:04)

Thank you.

**Novie Craven** (23:45:06)

Not only to see the FUNdamental part of Special Olympics but also see how much joy and inspiration these families have because the athletes are not able to speak, some of them, but also not able to usually get around people that don't put them, don’t put them down.

What is your hopes in life and with the future of Special Olympics?

**Lexi Holmes** (24:11:11)

I would hope that we build a machine for all the sports. We have currently basketball, baseball, tennis, and then like a rocket launcher. But we were just talking about doing soccer and all the other sports, being able to do those. And then in the future, I want to be able to keep volunteering and keep mentoring the Kinetic Kids. Those are things that I'm really passionate about.

I love being able to make these machines so they can do them. They get so excited, and I love to do that.

**Novie Craven** (24:38:12)

It was exciting for me to see how I'm able to understand that even though either basketball, there's different ways to play basketball. It's so amazing. Also, I have a question. What does inclusion mean to you?

**Lexi Holmes** (24:48:14)

Inclusion? Oh, I think it's including everyone from different colors, different races, different cultures, but also just including people that are different and unique. I like to use the word unique.

And I just think that including everyone gives a different perspective and gives you different machines, which is so cool. And I think all of this just is really amazing to be a part of.

**Novie Craven** (25:14:06)

Thank you so much.

**Lexi Holmes** (25:15:11)

It was nice to meet you.

**Novie Craven** (25:20:13)

It truly takes a village to make an experience like this happen. Athlete by athlete, medal by medal, a more inclusive world is closer every day. Last up, we're meeting some of our gold medalists.

**Novie Craven** (25:36:07)

I’m the podcast host of Inclusion Revolution Radio podcast. I would, I want to get some great content from the winning McKinney Magic, right?

**David Coffey** (25:45:16)

That's it.

**Novie Craven** (25:46:07)

Your coach…

**David Coffey** (25:47:04)

Yes, both coaches.

**Angelo Guardia** (25:48:43)

Coach David, Coach Guardia. For me, my son has autism. And I, I came from a soccer background, and I got back into the game when he was old enough to want to play. So, I've always thought it was important to support him as his father.

**Novie Craven** (26:05:16)

What about you, sir?

**David Coffey** (26:06:17)

Just these kids. They're competitive. They love being out here, love doing stuff.

**Novie Craven** (26:10:17)

What does inclusion mean to you?

**Angelo Guardia** (26:13:09)

Everybody gets a chance because everybody deserves a chance.

**Novie Craven** (26:16:10)

Right.

**David Coffey** (26:17:18)

That's it. Everybody.

**Novie Craven** (26:18:18)

Right.

**Special Olympics Texas Athlete** (26:19:07)

Anything's possible. Magic is possible.

**Special Olympics Texas Athlete** (26:23:17)

Only one thing I’m going to say is, the only one I'm going say is it’s all the magic. There you go.

**Novie Craven** (26:33:17)

If you thought we had left Texas without trying some authentic barbecue, think again. We made a stop at Hutchins BBQ in Melissa, Texas. Let me tell you, this smoked turkey sandwich was calling my name. Barbecue cravings satisfied. Until next time, Texas.

That's a wrap from Special Olympics Texas Summer Games. Thanks so much. It's been real, but definitely a great experience that I will never forget.

Thanks so much for everything. Keep listening to the Inclusion Revolution Radio podcast wherever you go. Yee-haw and goodbye from Texas.