

2020
2021



Annual Report

Latin America

*Special
Olympics*




The background of the page is a composite image. On the left, there is a blurred photograph of a large crowd of people, many wearing red and white clothing, suggesting a sports event or a large gathering. On the right, there is a map of a region in Central America, specifically Guatemala. The map shows various towns and geographical features. Labels visible on the map include 'Rubelsanto', 'QUICHÉ', 'Chajul', 'Uspulután', 'Canillá', 'Santa Cruz del Quiché', 'Totonicapán', 'Patzún', 'Patzún', 'Gusán', 'Monjas', 'El Progreso', 'Jutiapa', 'Valle Nuevo', 'SANTA ROSA', and 'EL SA'. A person's hand is visible at the bottom, pointing at the map.

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MISSION

The mission of Special Olympics is to provide 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.

***Special
Olympics***



MESSAGE FROM AN ATHLETE



Belonging to the Special Olympics organization has changed my life; I have more sports openness, I have made great friends, I have put into practice my knowledge on nutrition, and I have formed a great family. But let me tell you a little bit of my story before Special Olympics.

I discovered the world of sports almost 7 years ago, and art 10 years ago, as an oriental belly-dancer, although I had been singing since I was a child, as a mezzo-soprano. At the age of 4 I was in a car accident; I was in a coma for a long time, and my diagnosis did not give my parents much hope; the doctors said that, if I lived, I would be blind, disabled and could lose my hearing. The impact of this accident scarred us all.

When I finally returned to school, in a wheelchair, I remember crying and telling my mother, “I want to walk!” because I wanted to get up, run and play with my classmates. We remained faithful, always. Not only did I start walking again; I started dancing. And after 5

years, I said to myself “I need something stronger,” and I started sports: javelin throwing, karate-do, and finally athletics. My parents, out of fear, refused to let me play sports. It wasn’t easy for me, because we didn’t know what could happen to me, but it was the best decision I ever made.

I continued my sports and dance disciplines while studying, and was accepted to the National Autonomous University of Honduras, where I graduated with a degree in Nutrition. I got to be part of nutrition organizations and associations. These opportunities allowed me to get to know Special Olympics in 2017, as a hydrotherapy volunteer and then as an athlete. Today, I am an Athlete Leader and volunteer of the movement, and since 2020, member of the **Regional Athlete Leadership Council of Latin America**.

During these 2 years of pandemic, I have faced several challenges in my student, professional and sports life. But also, several victories. The pandemic began when

“At Special Olympics, we see the transformational power of sports in the confidence and health of people with intellectual disabilities, recognizing and respecting the similarities we share.”

I was in the penultimate academic period of the Bachelor's Degree in Nutrition, and I had to finish with online classes, but I stopped working and training with the team. In early 2021, I was able to formally rejoin a new job, return to my training, and begin my supervised institutional internship. It has been a challenge to get everything done, but it has gone well, and I have been in high demand, especially in the pediatric ward. That gives me a lot of satisfaction, because it reflects that the great effort I have invested has been worth it, and continues to give results. It is a challenge, but you can certainly do it: you just have to know how to prioritize and organize yourself.

I have learned many things, and among them, I can share with you how important it is to believe in yourself, how excellent it is to work as a team, and how satisfying it is to be transparent and dedicated to our vocation, acting with love and duty. I have done several things in my life, but what gives me the most satisfaction is to be able to serve others, to contribute my knowledge and the joy of being happy with what you do, with who you are, and with what you have. Knowing that you always give your best, with no regrets.

Sport has strengthened me mentally, and to be able to do it, as is the case with my athletics specialty, to me it means that I have a heavenly connection, thanking God for being alive, enjoying life and overcoming the obstacles I have faced to get here.

At Special Olympics, we see the transformational power of sports in the confidence and health of people with intellectual disabilities, recognizing and respecting the similarities we share. The inclusion we foster seeks to ensure that we are all “part of” and not “separate from,” so that there is reciprocal participation in which people with disabilities are considered for relevant decisions, have access to the same opportunities and exercise similar roles as those without disabilities.

To my fellow athletes, I want to say that you have to learn to trust yourself for everything, to accept yourself as you are, without asking the *why*, but the *what* for. There will always be problems, but also solutions, and it is normal to feel frustration, but we must know how to master our thoughts in those moments, because the mind is power. Failures are part of the process and that process is necessary to achieve success.

Day by day I experience different things, and those small positive changes that I see reflected in others because of my work have a great impact on me. **We are a family of athletes, where we all support each other.**

Thank you,

Patricia Peralta

Special Olympics Honduras Athlete

MESSAGE FROM OUR LEADERSHIP



In early 2020, everyone's lives were disrupted by the worst global health crisis of our time. The COVID-19 pandemic reached every corner of the world, affecting every life, every industry, isolating the world's population and highlighting the vulnerability of people with intellectual disabilities in existing health and social integration systems.

As the largest global organization for people with intellectual disabilities, our priority was clear, because the need has never been greater. Through sports, Special Olympics offers people with and without intellectual disabilities and their families a space to grow, share and enjoy. And that sense of community is tied to the sense of safety and inclusion that, for over 50 years, we have built globally.

We took action. If our athletes couldn't come to us, we had to go to them. We developed ways and tools to stay in touch, to educate about the global situation and how to respond to it. The pandemic had turned every home into an island, but with the technology in our hands and the efforts of our organization's members,

we built bridges to reassure athletes and families that they were not alone, nurturing the hope that, as soon as it was possible, we would see each other again on the playing field.

But in that long period between confinement and a possible distant hope, there was much work to be done. Human beings have always been known for finding a solution to any problem; this was no exception. The virtual terrain became a powerful ally, and the resourcefulness of the members of our movement was the driving force behind various initiatives that fed the flame that kept the darkness of the pandemic at bay. Trainings, workshops and even virtual celebrations were held globally, regionally and locally, keeping us connected and focused as the world searched for a solution to COVID-19.

We certainly went through some difficult times. But even so, there was room for learning. The confinement resulting from the pandemic caused many people to experience the level of isolation and vulnerability that people with intellectual disabilities experience on a

daily basis. Similarly, this “equal footing” sparked an interest and empowerment in our athletes, who saw the opportunity it presented. There was an increase in activities *led by* and *for* athletes with intellectual disabilities. From virtual spaces for recreation and socialization, to entrepreneurship, courses and collaborations. Our athletes shone, not only representing the Movement or their countries and communities, but themselves, as individuals with personal desires, goals and challenges.

At the local, regional and international levels, we support this leadership by fostering opportunities for our athletes to lead us and be our spokespersons to their peers and the world outside our organization.

“The inclusion we strive for is happening, in the workplace, in education, in culture and in public health.”

Athlete support in communicating the importance of vaccination and prioritization of people with disabilities was instrumental in changing attitudes towards COVID-19 prevention and care and creating prioritization policies. Testimonies and voices were heard and taken into account when representing the Movement and the population with intellectual disabilities before international organizations, in collaboration with governmental and corporate partners, and in awareness campaigns. The importance of self-representation as members of society was loud and clear.

If there is one thing our athletes, volunteers and staff are used to, is facing any obstacle with their heads held high. They demonstrate this by the mere fact of existing in a society that is often hostile to what is different, resistant to the changes that full and real

inclusion requires. But adversity has never stopped them. During these two years, our athletes have been the protagonists in stories of resilience, determination and courage. Those stories, in turn, serve as inspiration to those who follow in their footsteps. The inclusion we strive for is happening, in the workplace, in education, in culture and in public health. Every step forward is hard, but like our athletes, we know that the struggle is worth it, and we double our efforts.

As a global movement that seeks full inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities through sports, we will continue to expand and strengthen all aspects that lead us to the inclusive world that our founder, Eunice Kennedy Shriver, knew was possible. We will continue to prioritize health and education. We will continue to develop strategic alliances that secure resources and support for our program areas. We will work closely with government agencies to generate inclusive policies for people with disabilities in a post-Covid-19 world.

And we will continue to train, create opportunities, and provide a platform for our athletes, as leaders and representatives within and outside the Movement. Because we are winners. And together, we have overcome the challenges of these two years. Believing in ourselves and in our team. Supporting each other. The true sportsmanship that burns in the chest of every athlete and member of our organization knows that winning loses any meaning, if in the end you are alone; victory is sweeter and more complete when you have someone to share it with. The society we will build after this global pandemic needs the support and contribution of all its members. And we are ready to keep working.

Thank you,

Claudia Echeverry

Regional President and Managing Director
Special Olympics Latin America

COVID-19 IMPACT

As the world's leading sports organization for people with intellectual disabilities, Special Olympics has always had the physical health and well-being of our athletes as a top priority. During 2020 and 2021, our actions were guided by this urgent need to serve people with intellectual disabilities in the face of the challenges presented by the COVID-19 crisis.

Together, with the combined efforts of programs, athletes, coaches, families, staff and volunteers, we created different inclusive responses to these urgent needs of people with intellectual disabilities, positively impacting thousands of lives.

To do this, we focus on 5 key areas:

EDUCATE

people with intellectual disabilities (ID) and their families on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19. We developed educational modules and toolkits for people with ID and their families or caregivers on COVID-19 prevention, with instructions such as the importance of hygiene and self-quarantine, in formats that are easy for people with ID to understand.

TRAINING

health care providers on caring for people with ID, including those who may have COVID-19. We provide health care providers and students with online training to cover topics such as communicating test results and diagnoses appropriately, and how to work with people with ID to ensure cooperation and high-quality care.

ADVOCATE

for equal treatment for all, especially people with ID, with the purpose of having our beneficiaries share their voices, concerns and learning under legal frameworks and dignified response.

INVEST

in our online resources for education and virtual support on proper health care, early childhood development, counseling and emotional health, fitness routines, proper food and nutrition, among others. We transferred all our programmatic intervention to an online format, so families have access to development programs in different areas, with specific activities that they can do with their children at home to promote their development, reduce negative behaviors and de-stress, connecting in turn with other families in similar situations, receiving the necessary guidance and follow-ups.

ARTICULATE

assistance to support families with children with ID by ensuring their access to food, personal hygiene products and medicines.





INCLUSIVE RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Special Olympics is committed to promoting the rights and guarantee the well-being of people with intellectual disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. **We are creating a new model that seeks to reduce disparities in equitable access to quality health and social protection services for people with ID during this pandemic.**

People with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) are one of the most vulnerable populations to potential exposure to COVID-19, since they are at increased risk of developing health problems, being victims of neglect, violence and abuse during isolation and face a lack of access to health care services and public health information.

COVID-19 IMPACT

Population with Intellectual Disabilities.¹

3%
World
Population

18 Million
Latin
America



Even under normal circumstances, people with intellectual disabilities are less likely to access **health care, education, employment and be accepted and included in their community.**

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES INCLUDING THOSE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES ARE EXPOSED TO:

COVID-19 has aggravated their exclusion situation, generating greater disparities.²

- A higher risk of contracting COVID-19:** Due to obstacles in using basic hygiene measures, accessing public health information, and maintaining social distancing.³
- A higher risk of developing more serious health conditions and dying of COVID-19,** due to existing health factors such as respiratory function, heart disease or diabetes.⁵
- Being deprioritized for medical care and access to ventilators** under discriminatory criteria such as the value of life based on disability.⁶
- Facing exclusion in employment and little access to protection and social security measures.^{7,8}**
- Being excluded in terms of education** by having less access to accessible digital tools and limited or no access to the internet.⁹
- Facing significant interruptions in access to services and support systems.**



OUR REACH IN LATIN AMERICA

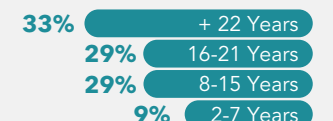
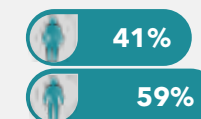
REGIONAL REACH

NATIONAL PROGRAMS
19

COUNTRIES
19



ATHLETES:
392,265



HEALTH:



VOLUNTEER HEALTH PROFESSIONALS:

4,800

PARTNERSHIPS WITH UNIVERSITIES:

22

MEDICAL REVIEWS TO ATHLETES:

20,521

HEALTH SPECIALITIES:

06

VOLUNTEERS:

67,817

YOUTH:

23,009

COACHES:

29,142

FAMILIES: 87,319





HEALTH

Educate people with ID and their families to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Guarantee public health information in accessible formats.

Educate health care professionals on the adequate care for people with ID.



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND WELLNESS

Create digital and print resources to promote physical activity, healthy eating, and emotional health and wellness at home - from early childhood.

Use our digital platforms and social networks to promote connectivity, reduce isolation and boost morale for people with ID and their families.



EDUCATION & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Invest in the development of online training modules for people with ID, families and volunteers.

Ensure the continuity of inclusive education programs.

Promote and articulate support services and social protection measures for people with ID and their families.



ADVOCACY

Advocate for access to quality health care for all, especially people with ID.

Develop awareness campaigns that promote the recognition and fulfillment of the rights of people with ID.

Collect data that allows us to report on the risks and disparities to which people with ID are exposed, promoting the need for protection and support measures.

OUR RESPONSE



JOIN OUR INCLUSIVE RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Special Olympics is currently developing a campaign to generate the necessary funds that will allow us to cover our efforts in an inclusive response to COVID-19, ensuring the quality of life of more than 390,000 of people with ID and their families in the region. These funds will support us in continuing to develop resources and actions in health, wellness & physical activity, education and community support. No group of people should be deprived of access to quality medical care and basic social protection services, and that includes people with ID. Therefore, how our society looks after this crisis will depend on our collective understanding of the threats posed by inequity and the work we do to address them.

Thank you for joining Special Olympics' response and CHOOSE TO INCLUDE.



Special Olympics

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As part of our efforts, these are some of the specific actions we are developing in each of the 4 focus areas of our inclusive response to COVID-19.



HEALTH

In order to educate people with ID, ensure public health information and raise awareness and educate health professionals, we have developed:

- **eLearning course about COVID-19** and prevention for people with ID and their families ([+Info](#))
- **Infographics and information on COVID-19** and prevention, in accessible formats ([+Info](#))
- **Online Training for Health Professionals** on Appropriate Care of people with ID ([+Info](#))
- **Self-Care Tips** for people with ID and their Families ([+Info](#))



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND WELLNESS

In order to promote physical activity, healthy eating and emotional well-being from early childhood, we have developed:

- **FIT 5 Home Training Resources** that include educational guide, follow-up calendar, a series of cards with endurance, strength and flexibility exercises and athlete-led instructional videos ([+Info](#))
- **Staying Fit at Home Guide** ([+Info](#))
- **Interactive Online program School of Strength** ([+Info](#))
- **Healthy Nutrition Guide** for People with ID and their families ([+Info](#))
- Tips and Recommendations on **Emotional Health and Stress Management** ([+Info](#))
- **Resources for Parents and Caregivers** of children, youth and adults with ID ([+Info](#)) ([+Info](#)) ([+Info](#))



EDUCATION & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

In order to promote and articulate support services for our athletes, as well as to ensure the continuity of inclusive education, we have developed:

- **Online training courses** for people with and without ID, families, coaches and volunteers ([+Info](#))
- **Leadership Guide for Athletes** from home ([+Info](#))
- **Series of educational modules** for people with ID in various areas
- **Resources Website** with easy access materials in Spanish & English for everyone ([+Info](#))
- **Internal weekly conferences** connecting with all Special Olympics Programs in Latin America to assess operational health of the Programs and effects of COVID-19 on the key constituent groups



ADVOCACY

In order to advocate for access to quality health care for all, especially for people with ID, we have developed:

- **Awareness Campaign for Inclusive Health** to ensure equal opportunities for care for people with ID worldwide. ([+ Info](#))
- **Tools for data collection**
- **An Advocacy Activation Toolkit** to promote the advocacy for the recognition and enforcement of rights and access to quality healthcare for people with ID

"Special Olympics athletes have the right to the same health care as everyone else.

Every life matters, including the lives of people with intellectual disabilities."

-Loretta Clairbone

Special Olympics Board Member and Athlete



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Vacunate

ISAAC
GONZALEZ
2021



HEALTH

Special Olympics Health efforts are focused on providing children and adults with intellectual disabilities access to preventive health programs and quality health services, allowing for an ongoing opportunity to improve their health and physical, emotional and social well-being.

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced a critical challenge to the health of people with intellectual disabilities, who are at increased risk and vulnerability to the effects of COVID-19. Addressing this problem was and continues to be one of our priorities, beginning with the creation and dissemination of public information materials, in accessible and easy-to-read and understand formats, on COVID-19 prevention and care.

Most health care providers receive very little training on health care for patients with intellectual disabilities. This is one of the barriers to access that people with intellectual disabilities face when seeking care. Our Health programs prepare health care professionals in the treatment and care for the intellectually disabled population through training, never before as necessary and urgent than in the current crisis presented by the global pandemic.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A MORE INCLUSIVE HEALTH

Special Olympics is the global organization with the most information, studies and programs focused on the health issues of people with intellectual disabilities. This makes us leading experts in Inclusive Health issues, reinforced by collaborations with important international organizations such as the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Organization of American States (OAS), with whom we have worked closely in meetings and presentations on health, access and prevention since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Special Olympics Latin America Programs took full advantage of the opportunities presented by the emphasis on virtual events and tools, as some of the following examples demonstrate:



HEALTH PROFESSIONALS, COMMITTED TO A TRULY INCLUSIVE WORLD

As part of the **Special Olympics Healthy Communities** program, **Special Olympics Puerto Rico** developed a series of trainings for health professionals, teaching them about processes for treating the population with intellectual disabilities, thus enabling them to serve and care for more members of their communities.

FAMILY AND HEALTH FORUMS

Special Olympics programs in Latin America maintained close contact with families and caregivers of athletes with intellectual disabilities through virtual **Family and Health Forums**, which provided valuable information, resources and support in a safe and healthy way for all participants. From the beginning of 2020 to mid-2021, 21 Family and Health Forums have been held at the national level and 4 at the regional level, benefiting more than 1,000 family members and 450 athletes with intellectual disabilities in Latin America.

REAL SOLIDARITY



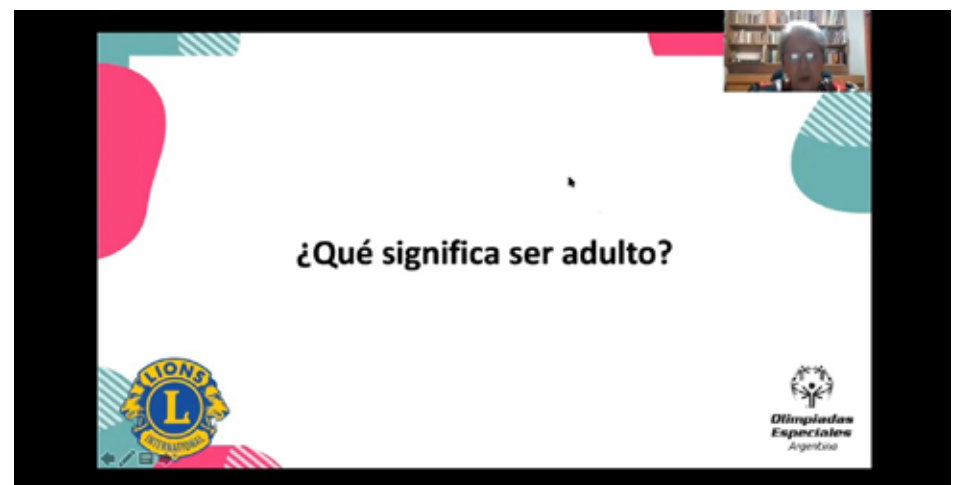
We share the same world, and the same society. Real inclusion also means real solidarity with others. That is why **Special Olympics Ecuador** supported **Dar Una Mano Sin Dar La Mano**, a national fundraiser to raise money for the purchase of food kits for vulnerable families from underserved communities, economically affected by the arrival of the pandemic.

HEALTHY TEETH AND BRIGHT SMILES



Through our Health programs and partnerships, such as **Special Olympics Healthy Athletes**, we offer free medical check-ups for people with intellectual disabilities. These screenings are crucial to the health of athletes, who face difficulties accessing health services in their communities. Partnerships with medical schools, such as the dental school of the **Universidad Autónoma de Asunción in Paraguay**, offer an invaluable service to our population, but also familiarize teachers and students with how to deal with people with disabilities, and in many cases, serve as an introduction to our Movement for Inclusion, awakening their interest in becoming part of it as volunteers.

ACTIVATING AND WORKING ALONG WITH FAMILY MEMBERS AND PARTNERS



Special Olympics Argentina held several successful virtual meetings, such as its **V Health and Family Forum**, which had the collaboration of the **Lions Club**, **Youth Leaders** and **Siblings of the Movement**, and partners and guests who presented various topics of interest to families. One of the greatest benefits of the virtual modality of these events is that they allowed the participation of audiences from other Latin American countries, which in this case included members from Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic and Panama, among others.

STRONG AND HEALTHY MINDS



One of the greatest challenges presented by the pandemic was the effect on mental health resulting from the confinement, uncertainty, and unpleasant emotions in the face of this global crisis. People with intellectual disabilities and their families had an even more complex challenge in navigating these issues. Aware of this need, **Special Olympics Chile** joined forces with the **Fundación Amigos por Siempre (Forever Friends Foundation)** to develop a series of virtual lectures to guide families and caregivers on managing and caring for the emotional well-being of people with intellectual disabilities.



SPORT & FITNESS

Each year, Special Olympics holds thousands of sports competitions around the world, large and small. Each one brings out new strengths and abilities in our athletes, changes attitudes about the talents of people with intellectual disabilities and ensures the well-being of our athletes.

With the isolation, anxiety and suspension of face-to-face activities due to the global pandemic of COVID-19, Special Olympics has worked harder than ever to ensure the emotional and physical well-being of our athletes and ensure they stay connected and active.

During 2020 and 2021, we focused on creating digital and printed resources that help promote physical activity, healthy eating and emotional wellness at home for our athletes. We also used our digital and social media platforms to continue our sports programming, promote connectivity, reduce isolation, and boost the spirits and morale of our athletes and their families. Through these digital platforms, we were able to develop a calendar of virtual sports activities that allowed our athletes to train, maintain their fitness and compete.

PHYSICAL HEALTH – A PRIORITY DURING THE PANDEMIC



Home quarantine, which kept our athletes safe from the danger of COVID-19, put their health at risk due to lack of physical activity and sedentary lifestyles. Special Olympics developed resources such as the **FIT 5** home exercise series and the **SCHOOL OF STRENGTH**, which allowed people with intellectual disabilities and their families to exercise and stay fit despite confinement away from the playing field. Both resources were supported by Special Olympics athletes, and in the case of SCHOOL OF STRENGTH, by **WWE Superstar Becky Lynch**.

A RACE WITH A HEART

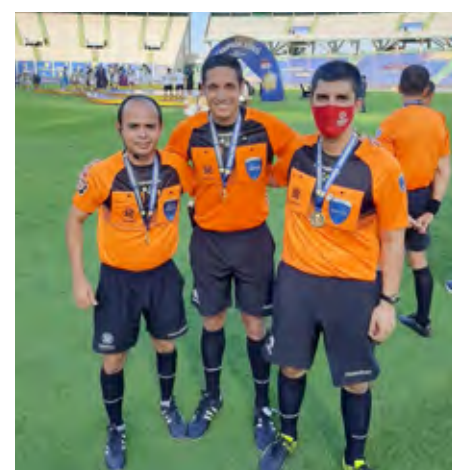


Special Olympics Mexico ambassadors participated in the virtual race **#AyudaALosAlosQueAyudan**, organized by the **Ayuda Desde Casa** movement. The ambassadors used their networks and contacts to encourage followers to support them in this “virtual marathon” fundraiser, which sought to raise awareness and support for various non-profit organizations and social causes in Mexico that have been severely affected by the pandemic.

HISTORIC MOMENT OF SPORTS INCLUSION

“An inclusive world is a place where people with and without intellectual disabilities can work together. It’s important to me, because it helps eliminate discrimination.”

—**Hassam Zogaib**
Athlete Leader of Special Olympics Paraguay



Soccer lovers witnessed a historic moment during the **CONMEBOL SUDAMERICANA** and the **LIBERTADORES Cup** games---**Hassam Zogaib**, Athlete Leader of **Special Olympics Paraguay**, was on the field as the first person with an intellectual disability to be part of the official CONMEBOL refereeing team. A historical moment for sports and inclusion, a strong public demonstration of CONMEBOL’s commitment to a truly inclusive world, and a personal victory for Hassam, as a result of years of hard work, effort and professional experience as a referee.

TAKING OUR MESSAGE OF INCLUSION TO NEW FRONTIERS



Special Olympics Chile became the first country in Latin America to develop an inclusive eSports (multiplayer video games) tournament, with the participation of athletes, influencers and *gamers* (professional players) with and without intellectual disabilities, in an event broadcast live on digital platforms.

Special Olympics recognizes the importance of diversifying its outreach in these spaces shared by young (and not so young!) people with and without intellectual disabilities; a space for socialization that is part of the normal, everyday environment of the members of our Movement, and that also needs our message of inclusion.

"We want to take inclusion to new spaces. We know that many young people with intellectual disabilities participate in eSports; our intention is to work with them. We want to bring teamwork, leadership, values and what regular sports offers."

–Carolina Picasso
President of Special Olympics Chile

A NETWORK OF SCREENS, SHARING THE JOY OF SPORT



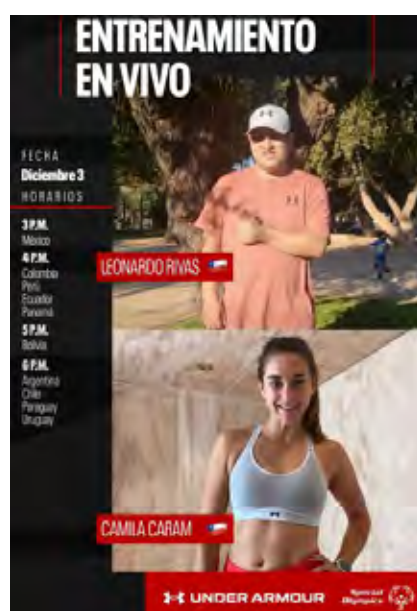
Through the digital tools at their disposal, Special Olympics Latin America Programs connected with athletes, volunteers, coaches and families of the Movement, activating them in virtual training sessions that could be carried out from the comfort and safety of their homes.

A SPACE FOR CHILDREN TO BE CHILDREN



Special Olympics Venezuela organized a **Young Athletes Virtual Festival**, where children of our Movement were able to participate along with their families in an exhibition of the skills developed through the **Special Olympics Young Athletes Program**, designed for children with and without intellectual disabilities, ages 2 to 7, to practice and develop motor and sports skills, through games and physical activities. The event was a great way to connect with other families during the pandemic, and to engage the children at home in healthy, fun and safe activations.

EMPHASIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF SPORT TOGETHER WITH OUR PARTNERS



The importance of physical activity and sports training during this pandemic isolation was of crucial importance and presented a great challenge to our Movement. Therefore, we joined forces with several of our partners, both regional and national, to collaborate on virtual workouts and exercise routines for the benefit of the community with and without intellectual disabilities.

These activations also served to spread our message of inclusion to new audiences. In the case of our collaboration with **Under Armour Latin America**, Special Olympics athletes accompanied coaches representing Under Armour in training challenges broadcast live on our partner's social networks to its more than 900 thousand followers. The interaction with our athletes was also an unforgettable experience for our partners, who demonstrated the strength of their commitment to a truly inclusive world, such as the partnership with trainer and influencer **Mariela Bravo**, who not only supported with live exercise sessions with athletes, but also through the creation of a training course, **BE A HERO**, which cost would be donated directly to Special Olympics.

ISOLATED, BUT NEVER ALONE

The role of caregivers and parents of people with intellectual disabilities was affected by the pandemic, with challenges for which they may not have been prepared. In addition to sharing tools and materials to physically activate athletes from the safety of their home, Special Olympics provided resources to educate and support caregivers and family members in dealing with these situations, a reality previously unknown to all. Guidelines for both physical and emotional care of the person with an intellectual disability, adult or otherwise, were among the materials created and disseminated to people inside and outside our movement.



EDUCATION & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

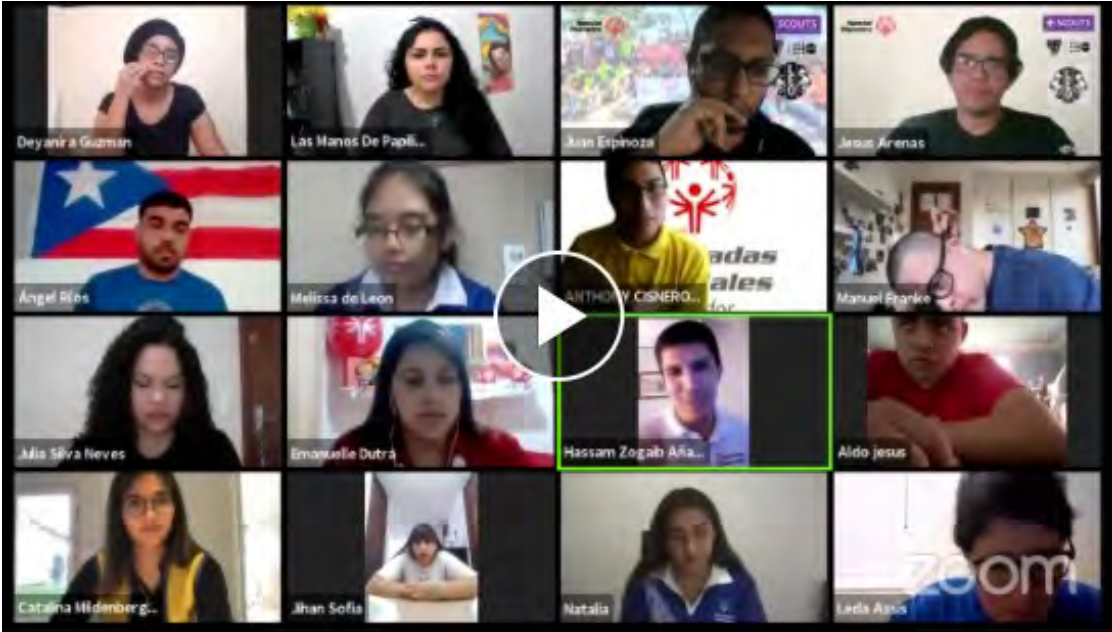
Special Olympics envisions a world where all people are valued for the unique and special contributions they make to their communities, and where people are respected, included and welcomed in society regardless of differences in their abilities. Young people, with and without intellectual disabilities, are a crucial element in creating this world. They are more in tune with inclusion - they understand and embrace it.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic began, people with intellectual disabilities faced enormous disparities in education systems. Inequity and injustice led to social exclusion and isolation in schools, communities and at home. These disparities were bad enough, and the pandemic deepened them even further.

With sports at its core, Special Olympics Unified Schools offers programs and activities that equip young people with the tools and training to create inclusive experiences. These sports, classroom and community experiences improve attitudes and behaviors among all youth, with and without intellectual disabilities.

During 2020 and 2021, Special Olympics was a pioneer in the creation of several distance learning tools and resources to support students, teachers and families, as well as ensure the continuity of inclusive education. With topics ranging from having a sense of belonging, teamwork, leadership and others, the resources were a valuable contribution for both students and teachers to build inclusion.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS YOUTH SHOW US THEIR VISION AND COMMITMENT TO A BETTER WORLD



Youth Leaders from Latin America, with and without intellectual disabilities, met virtually at the **“Youth Action: Inclusive proposals for a new normality”**. This conversation, led by and for young people, addressed the different aspects of the work needed for a more dignified and inclusive future for people of all abilities.

Among the topics highlighted were the uses of technology for inclusion, such as virtual training and education and digital activism; the positive impact of youth-led community projects; and the contribution of young people to the fulfillment of the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

“Over the years, people with intellectual disabilities have faced discrimination and prejudice, we have not been allowed to participate in sports, in the arts, in education, workplaces and in having a family... but these Youth Leaders are here to say “we have a voice, we have the power of change, we are the present and the future. No more discrimination, the revolution is inclusion.”

–Emanuelle Dutra
Global Messenger and Special Olympics Brazil Athlete



CELEBRATING OUR DIVERSITY THROUGH OUR GIFTS!

What started as a proposal by **Special Olympics Youth Leaders** to provide a safe, virtual space where athletes and other members of the movement could share their talents quickly evolved from a private event to a public celebration of the enormous diversity of gifts found in Special Olympics.

The **Special Olympics Latin America Talent Festival** offered three days of art and skills, including dancing, painting, singing, cooking and more. The success of this festival has made it one of the true legacies of the virtual event era, with national versions and even a Christmas edition.

VOCATION, DETERMINATION AND INNOVATION



Our coaches demonstrate why they are so admired and loved by Special Olympics athletes; even during the isolation of the pandemic, coaches continued to prepare thanks to Special Olympics virtual courses and certifications.

Latin America was the region with the most courses and training taken during the pandemic by Special Olympics coaches, with **6,000 courses completed** on digital platforms and virtual workshops. But the coaches' determination did not only encompass their preparation and training; they also used social networks to stay connected and train as many athletes as possible, with virtual exercises and activities, to keep athletes and their families active.

LEADING US INTO THE FUTURE

Special Olympics Argentina's Athlete Leaders continue to prepare themselves to keep guiding the future of the Movement, using technology to prepare during the quarantine. These meetings include the Athletes training on the **Board of Directors** and the virtual **Athlete Leader Committee** meeting, which allow Special Olympics athletes and staff to remain active despite the distance, developing initiatives and offering support to those who need it most.

TAKING CARE OF OUR COMMUNITIES

Special Olympics provides opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities to practice their sports disciplines and form bonds with the community to which they belong, to foster a sense of inclusion and belonging to the world around them. Activities such as the cleanup of La Pocita beach in Puerto Rico by members of **Special Olympics Puerto Rico** and the **Student Chapter of the Sociedad Ambiente Marino (Marine Environment Society) (CESAM)** of the University of Puerto Rico make our athletes visible as members of the community, committed to the social causes of their respective countries.



We should always take care of nature, the sea, the rivers and the animals. I am an open water swimmer, and this taught me that it is very important to take care of the beaches and rivers, and to not contaminate them."

—Wilbert Guzmán
Special Olympics Puerto Rico athlete and activist



ADVOCACY

As the world's most inclusive organization for people with intellectual disabilities, Special Olympics uses the convening and inclusive power of sport not only to ensure the right to practice sports for people with intellectual disabilities, but also to advance the human rights and development goals of this population in topics related to health, community integration and education.

One of the pillars of Special Olympics' programmatic development is education and public advocacy. Special Olympics actively advocates for the world's population of people with intellectual disabilities on several fronts. First, through the Athlete Leadership Programs, athletes are trained in interpersonal and leadership skills that enable them to become more visible in their communities and assert themselves in leadership positions. Special Olympics also advocates for athletes through data collection and research on the situation of people with intellectual disabilities. In order to demand the rights and services that athletes are entitled to, it is necessary to have data that shows where the needs are and what services are not being provided. Through magnifying the voice of people with intellectual disabilities, Special Olympics works to raise awareness and promote inclusion.

During 2020 and 2021, in the face of the global COVID-19 pandemic, Special Olympics Programs across the region advocated for access to quality health care for all, especially people with intellectual disabilities. Through awareness campaigns that promoted the recognition and fulfillment of the rights of people with intellectual disabilities and the prioritization of this group of people for vaccination, Special Olympics advocated for public policies that upheld the rights of people with intellectual disabilities. At the same time, we collected data that allowed us to inform about the risks and disparities to which people with intellectual disabilities are exposed, promoting the need for protection and support measures.

A MORE INCLUSIVE FUTURE BEGINS IN TODAY'S CLASSROOMS

Through programs such as **Unified Schools**, Special Olympics makes inclusion a matter of course, preparing the youth of today to recognize and appreciate the strength and richness that exists in the diversity of abilities, creating men and women aware of their role in creating a just, dignified and inclusive world for all.

Together with the **Inter-American Development Bank**, Special Olympics Latin America implemented a pilot model of Unified Schools in **63 schools in Panama**, reaching more than **23,000 students**, with and without intellectual disabilities, and **500 teachers**.

The results showed the positive effects that this inclusion program has, both on the population with intellectual disabilities, as well as on students without disabilities, teachers and even family members.



RESULTS

—
63

Schools visited

—
19,633

Participation of students without intellectual disabilities.

—
4,628

Participation of students with intellectual disabilities.



—
508

teachers trained in inclusive care and teaching

—
86%

of students reported increased participation in school activities and awareness and inclusion opportunities, reducing bullying and offensive language in their schools

—
94%

of students with intellectual disabilities reported increased self-confidence (leadership and autonomy)

—
Increased classroom participation by students with intellectual disabilities

—
Increased opportunities for students with and without intellectual disabilities to work together.



FACE MASK



HAND
WASHING



VACCINATION



THE URGENT AND NECESSARY DUTY OF A TRULY INCLUSIVE HEALTH SYSTEM

All human beings have the right to health - to medical care and necessary social services. However, people with intellectual disabilities face many barriers to accessing health services in their communities. Changing that reality is one of our priorities.

Through our **Mission Moment: Inclusive Health**, we reach out to external and internal audiences, educating on our efforts to improve access to health services, raise awareness of the why and how of this urgent need, and offer support and practical information for athletes, family members and health professionals.

The onset of the first wave of population isolation from the COVID-19 pandemic coincided with the launch of **Mission Moment: Inclusive Health** in 2020; Special Olympics directed all of its efforts to collect, adapt and inform about prevention and care measures due to the risk presented by COVID-19 to people with intellectual disabilities.

In 2021, the focus of the **Mission Moment - Inclusive Health** was on:

- Raising awareness about the importance of prioritizing vaccination against COVID-19 for the population with intellectual disabilities and their caregivers
- Combating existing misinformation about vaccines, which sowed fears and doubts among those most vulnerable to this disease.



A MORE INCLUSIVE FUTURE, POSSIBLE WITH THE EFFORTS OF EVERY MEMBER OF OUR MOVEMENT



Special Olympics continues to grow and strengthen its presence around the world thanks to the contributions and efforts of every athlete, family member, volunteer, staff, ally and ambassador. As an expert in inclusion issues for people with disabilities, and in its role as a training partner of the **Universidad Tecnológico de Monterrey (Tec)**, **Special Olympics Mexico** participated in the consultation for the creation of tools and virtual guides for people with Down Syndrome, through the support of family members of athletes with intellectual disabilities who are part of our Movement.

BRINGING ATTENTION TO THE SUPPORT AND COMMITMENT TO INCLUSION



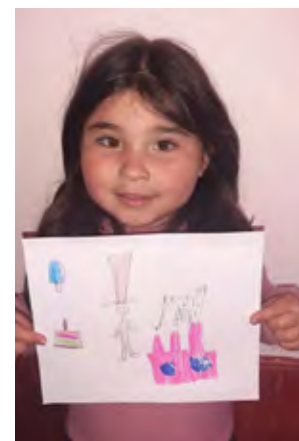
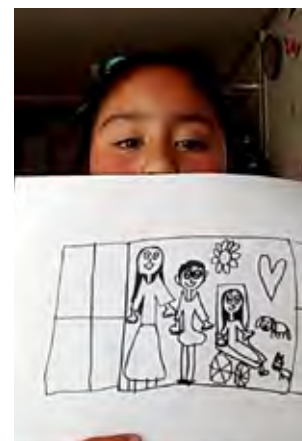
Regional sports organizations allied to Special Olympics publicly showed their support and strong commitment to inclusion, highlighting the work done together for a more inclusive world with their followers on social networks during the **International Day of People with Disabilities**.



VACCINATION: A GLOBAL PRIORITY

Special Olympics programs in Latin America, armed with knowledge about the importance of vaccination and the challenges faced by the population with intellectual disabilities in accessing health services, mobilized their resources, contacts and influence to raise awareness among the public and local governments about why the population with disabilities should be prioritized in the vaccination process at the national level, also assisting with logistics and activation of our athletes.

GETTING TO KNOW THE INNER WORLD OF OUR ATHLETES



Art is a window to the worlds, emotions and thoughts we carry inside. It allows us to communicate and express our feelings, whether they are worries or joys.

In commemoration of the **International Day of Sport for Development and Peace**, Special Olympics Latin America and the **UNESCO Cluster Office for Central America** joined forces to develop the art contest **“The Power of Inclusive Sport”**. More than 110 art pieces from 12 Latin American countries were submitted for this contest!

To teach about the importance of a truly inclusive world, Special Olympics Latin America collaborated with **UNICEF** and artist **Gusti Rosemffet** to develop **“Pintando la Inclusión...En una Casa con Muchas Ventanas” (Painting Inclusion...In A House with Many Windows)**, a series of creative encounters for children with and without intellectual disabilities from across Latin America, where they learned, shared and expressed their vision of an inclusive world of dignity, love and respect.

“The important thing is to share how we feel about inclusion. And I wanted to thank Latin America for sharing all their drawings, because they represent a lot of details, emotions and all that.”

-Rocío Ochoa
Special Olympics Chile athlete
and art contest winner



GENERATING REAL AND LASTING CHANGES

Special Olympics Paraguay signed a cooperation agreement with the **National Secretariat for the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities (SENADIS) of Paraguay**, outlining a collaboration framework for the development, implementation and execution of projects, policies and programs that will benefit not only people with disabilities, but society as a whole.

This type of governmental alliances generates policies and changes in the social and cultural paradigm, making future generations have a different understanding and comprehension regarding the real inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities. This is how we achieve a truly inclusive world.



UNIFIED LEADERSHIP

Special Olympics is creating a new understanding of leadership inspired by our athletes, and highlighting the leadership potential in people of all abilities. Building on sport, Unified Leadership teaches leaders of all abilities to value and learn from each other, and create environments where people with intellectual disabilities succeed in important roles.

The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly affected the lives of people around the world, including our Youth Leaders. We all had to change the way we learn, work, play and interact with each other, enhancing the importance of innovation and creativity. During 2020 and 2021, Special Olympics Youth Leaders took on the challenge posed by COVID-19, creating projects that portrayed their new reality: inclusion in their homes, schools and communities, in a virtual environment.

The projects and activities carried out by the Youth Leaders harnessed virtual platforms to keep the population with intellectual disabilities empowered and with enough tools to defend their rights. Likewise, it was our Youth Leaders who continued to spread positive and educational messages, motivating others while continuing to contribute to their communities and society.

EMPOWERING LEADERS OF THE UNIFIED GENERATION

The **Youth Innovation Grants** initiative, supported by global leaders in philanthropy, provides the resources and technical support for **Youth Leaders** with and without intellectual disabilities in our movement to design, plan and implement their inclusion projects in their schools and communities. During 2020 and 2021, 27 pairs of Youth Leaders from Latin America led diverse projects fostering inclusion and creating real and inspiring change for others.

YOUTH LEADERS LEADING THROUGH EXAMPLE

Through the use of the digital tools at their disposal, the new generations of **Special Olympics Youth Leaders** participated in **Regional and Local Youth Leadership Summits**, where they shared and learned together with their peers about the necessary tools, know-how and resources to foster real, viable inclusion in their schools and communities. The multiplier effect of the Summits prepare and motivate participating Youth Leaders to share their knowledge and connect with their peers, with and without intellectual disabilities, strengthening the Movement on a local level through the organization of Local Summits, both virtual and in-person.

“WE CAN CHANGE OUR PRESENT AND CREATE A BETTER FUTURE. BECAUSE WE ARE THE CHANGE!”



In 2020, **26 Youth Leaders** with and without intellectual disabilities, from **13 Latin American countries**, gathered in Guatemala to participate in the **I Special Olympics Regional Youth Leadership Summit**, a meeting where young members of our movement were able to exchange experiences and learn new skills that will be useful in their projects and initiatives, and that in turn, they will share with other Youth Leaders in their respective countries.

Preparing Youth Leaders is crucial for the development and survival of our movement, because it empowers a new generation, with and without intellectual disabilities, encouraging them to take the initiative on issues of inclusion in their communities and schools, preparing them to be decisive, fair and inclusive adults--and thus be able to guide our movement into the future, also attracting other people through their words and actions.

The pandemic has not slowed the efforts of Special Olympics Youth Leaders, who have adapted to the circumstances, taking advantage of the digital tools at their disposal to develop and participate in several virtual meetings, including **Virtual Youth Leadership Summits**, supported by partners such as **Kantar, Microsoft, Lane Global Youth** and the **Project Management Institute Education Foundation (PMIEF)**.

PREPARING FUTURE LEADERS AND SPOKESPEOPLE



The society we are building is made up of people with and without intellectual disabilities, in positions of responsibility, representation and decision-making. Through the **Special Olympics Athlete Leadership Program**, whose new curriculum has been implemented virtually, and in some cases such as **Special Olympics El Salvador**, in person, we prepare people with intellectual disabilities for positions and leadership responsibilities, inside and outside the organization. These skills and abilities provide athletes with a level of personal fulfillment and professional growth that helps to make people with intellectual disabilities visible as productive members of society.

The preparation of spokespersons and representatives includes people with and without intellectual disabilities, as they are all important allies in spreading our message of inclusion. Initiatives such as the **III Special Olympics Venezuela Spokesperson Training Workshop** provide athletes, managers, local ambassadors and program staff with the necessary tools to effectively and faithfully communicate the extensive work of our Movement at the local and regional level.

WORKPLACE INCLUSION: BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE, DIGNIFIED AND MEANINGFUL ENVIRONMENT



An important goal for many people with intellectual disabilities is to be able to contribute to their environment and secure independence through a job.

Special Olympics works closely with a number of partners to raise awareness among companies and organizations about the importance of including people with intellectual disabilities in their workforce, and what this means for both the person with an intellectual disability and their colleagues and employers.

Companies such as **3M Latin America** recognize the value of diversity and inclusion in their team, and through initiatives such as its **dAN (disAbility Network)**, have managed conversations or exchanges with Special Olympics athletes, where real testimonies of people with intellectual disabilities in a work environment are shared; what it means for them to have a job opportunity, experiences they have had, and opinions on what still needs to be achieved.

In the same way, Special Olympics had the pleasure of activating its Athlete Leaders in awareness sessions with other corporate partners that are committed to a more dignified, fair and inclusive work environment and society, such as **Disney, HAYS** and **Walmart Mexico**.



OPENING HEARTS & MINDS

Special Olympics' vision is to open hearts and minds towards people with intellectual disabilities and create inclusive communities, in the region and around the world.

During 2020 and 2021, and keeping the safety and health of our athletes as a priority, Special Olympics directed efforts to raise awareness of the Movement, the achievements, hopes and dreams of our athletes and to change attitudes towards people with intellectual disabilities. Through our campaigns, the media, the support of our Ambassadors and our corporate partnerships, the voices and rights of our athletes reached new audiences throughout the region and contributed to raising awareness and spreading our inclusive message.

INSPIRING INCLUSION THROUGH CULTURE



Inclusion with all its letters, a literary contest developed by Special Olympics Chile together with the **Municipality of Melipilla** and the **Municipal Corporation for Education and Health of Melipilla (CORMUMEL)**, invited young students from different schools to tell stories about sports as a vehicle to achieve the inclusion of people with intellectual or physical disabilities. The panel of judges included **Constanza Sanhueza**, actress and **Athlete Leader of Special Olympics Chile**, and **Beatriz García Huidobro**, teacher and renowned children's author.

CONNECTING WITH OTHERS ACROSS DISTANCES



The Ambassadors who participated in the **Special Olympics Guatemala Fit Challenge** know all too well the importance of fitness and the best way to stay in shape despite the challenges presented by the pandemic. They shared with Special Olympics athletes that passion for fitness in a network activation, which also spread our message of inclusion to the thousands of followers of these Ambassadors of the Fitness world.

"WE ARE FIGHTING FOR A WORLD OF INCLUSION"



Talent, effort and dedication can take you to the top and make you an idol for thousands of people. But to achieve true greatness, it's what's in your heart that matters. And **Major League Baseball (MLB)** all-stars and new Special Olympics Global Ambassadors **Gleyber Torres** and **Willson Contreras** are a great example of this.

"I think it's a great opportunity to change the world and give our best."

–Gleyber Torres,
NY Yankees - Special Olympics Global Ambassador



"We are fighting for a world of inclusion."

–Willson Contreras,
Chicago Cubs - Special Olympics Global Ambassador

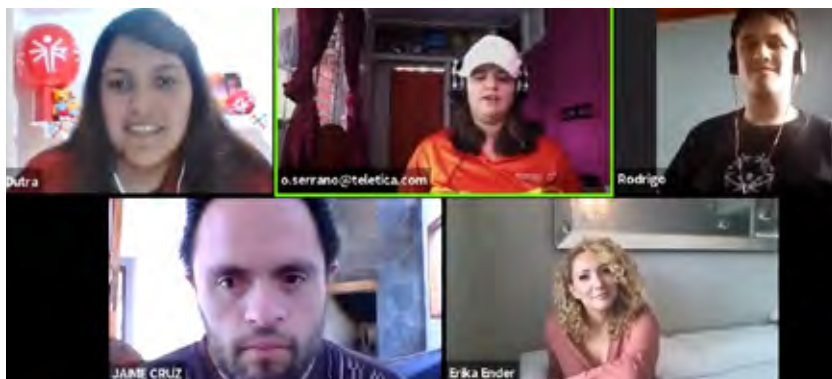
THE UNWAVERING HUMAN SPIRIT, FUELED BY A JUST CAUSE



Our athletes demonstrate time and again the courage, determination and strength that lies within the human being, and thereby inspire others, fueling that inner fire that drives us to accomplish great feats.

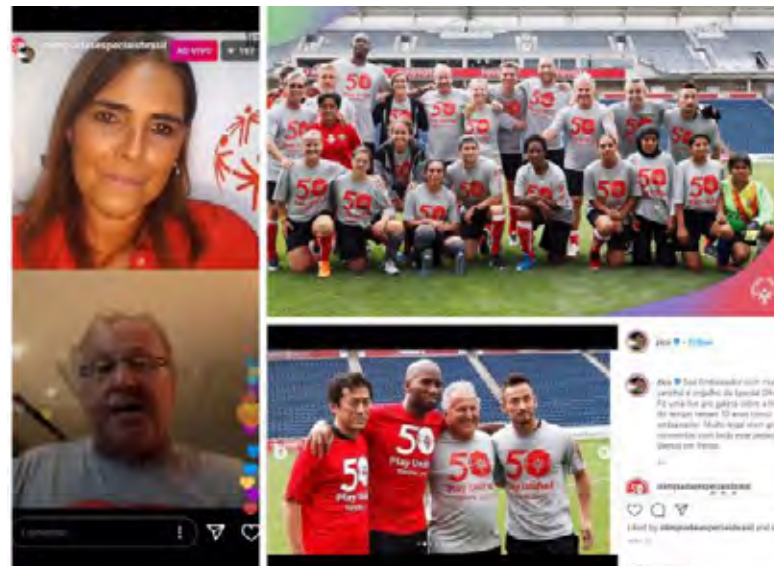
Joel Matos, open water ultra-swimmer, has been inspired by the athletes of **Special Olympics Puerto Rico**, to whom he has dedicated his latest feats, testing the limits of his physical fitness to raise funds for the benefit of our Movement. Aside from the marathon swim sessions, **Brazadas por la Inclusion (Strokes for Inclusion)**, where he swam for 30 consecutive hours, in 2021 he participated in the **Triple Crown Open Water Swim**, completing the international swim circuit in 27 days, breaking the existing world record, and dedicating it to raising awareness and funds for Special Olympics Puerto Rico.

A CONVERSATION WITH THE YOUTH OF OUR MOVEMENT



Erika Ender, renowned singer-songwriter, philanthropist and **Special Olympics Global Ambassador**, met with several **Athlete Leaders** of the movement to discuss their projects, dreams and concerns. The session, moderated by **Emanuelle Dutra**, **Global Messenger and Athlete Leader of Special Olympics Brazil**, included the participation of **Karina Serrano** (Special Olympics Costa Rica), **Rodrigo Silvero** (Special Olympics Argentina) and **Jaime Cruz** (Special Olympics Peru), and addressed issues of youth leadership, leadership of people with intellectual disabilities, and labor inclusion.

A LEGEND INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE FIELD



Special Olympics Ambassadors, celebrities from the world of sports or entertainment, are strongly committed to our vision of a more inclusive world for all. And they demonstrate this through the use of their platforms and reach, spreading our message to their audiences, and also by sharing their time, expertise and warmth with Special Olympics athletes, coaches, families and volunteers.

Celebrities such as **Arthur "Zico" Antunes Coimbra**, Brazilian soccer legend and **Special Olympics Brazil** ambassador, participated in a series of live interviews with Ambassadors and sports and health professionals, answering questions and providing useful information to athletes, families and other members of our Movement during the COVID-19 pandemic.

REGIONAL PARTNERS



A Very Special Christmas



Lions Clubs International
Foundation



Stavros Niarchos Foundation



ESPN



Banco Interamericano
de Desarrollo

JCDecaux Top Media

JC Decaux Panamá



Hays



Copa Airlines

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Fundación POETA



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Badminton Pan America



THANKS!



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