



Special Olympics

Did You Know?...

- That Special Olympics has extensive programming in the areas of health, education and community building in addition to its well-established sports programs.
- That more than 75% of Special Olympics athletes are outside of the United States!
- To be eligible to participate in Special Olympics, an athlete must be at least eight years of age and identified by an agency or professional as having one of the following conditions: intellectual disability, cognitive delays as measured by formal assessment, or significant learning or vocational problems due to cognitive delay that have required specially designed instruction.
- Special Olympics athletes are divided to compete in categories based on gender, age, and ability level by a process called "divisioning".
- All Special Olympics activities reflect the values, standards, traditions, ceremonies, and events embodied in the modern Olympic movement. These Olympic-type activities have been broadened and enriched to celebrate the moral and spiritual qualities of persons with intellectual disabilities so as to enhance their dignity and self-esteem.
- Eunice Kennedy Shriver founded Special Olympics in 1968, with the first international Special Olympics Games at Soldier Field in Chicago. Her son, Timothy P. Shriver is currently the Chairman of Special Olympics Board of Directors. Janet Froetscher currently serves as the CEO, and the Special Olympics International Board of Directors is comprised of a range of leaders in sports, entertainment and government.
- Individuals who compete in Special Olympics develop improved physical fitness and motor skills and greater self-confidence. They exhibit courage and enthusiasm and build lasting friendships. These life skills enhance their ability to live normal productive lives. More than ever, Special Olympics athletes hold jobs, own homes, go to school and successfully confront life challenges on a daily basis.
- Special Olympics receives funding in support of the movement from individuals, corporations, foundations, government and restricted grants. The vast majority of funding received is from individuals through the Special Olympics direct mail program.
- The Law Enforcement Torch Run® (LETR) for Special Olympics is the movement's largest grass-roots fundraiser, having raised more than US\$461 million since its inception, encompassing a variety of events including Torch Runs, Polar Plunge events and the World's Largest Truck Convoy fundraisers. More than 97,000 international law enforcement officers have carried the Flame of Hope.

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- Since 1987, the 'A Very Special Christmas' holiday album series has changed lives through generating over US\$116 million in royalties in direct support of SO programs, thanks to the generosity of top international acclaimed recording artists..

- That Special Olympics operates worldwide in accordance with the following principles:

- That the goal of Special Olympics is to help bring all persons with intellectual disabilities into the larger society under conditions whereby they are accepted, respected and given a chance to become productive citizens.
- That comprehensive, year-round sports training is available to every Special Olympics athlete, conducted by well-qualified coaches in accordance with the standardized Sports Rules formulated and adopted by Special Olympics, and that each athlete who participates in Special Olympics will be trained in their sport.
- That Special Olympics provides full participation for every athlete regardless of economic circumstance and conducts training and competition under the most favorable conditions possible, including facilities, administration, training, coaching, officiating and events.
- That at every Awards Ceremony, in addition to the traditional medals for first, second and third places, athletes finishing from fourth to last place are presented a suitable place ribbon with appropriate ceremony.
- That, to the greatest extent possible, Special Olympics activities will be run by and involve local volunteers, from school and college-age individuals to senior citizens, in order to foster greater understanding of intellectual disabilities.
- That, although Special Olympics is primarily a program of sports training and competition, efforts are made to offer athletes a full range of artistic, social and cultural experiences through activities such as dances, art exhibits, concerts, visits to historic sites, clinics, theatrical performances and similar events.
- That the "Spirit of Special Olympics" skill, courage, sharing and joy incorporates universal values that transcend all boundaries of geography, nationality, political philosophy, gender, age, race or religion.

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