

Special Olympics Michigan Young Athletes™ Program



Special Olympics
Michigan
youngathletes™

Michigan

20,679 athletes
889 Young Athletes

23 sports offered

8 state-level competitions,
district basketball
tournaments and more than
400 competitions statewide.

Year-round sports training
and competitions

20,000 volunteers

Programs provided at no
cost to athletes or their
families

Budget funded almost
entirely by private donations

Sports include:

Alpine Skiing

Aquatics

Athletics

Basketball

Bocce

Bowling

Cross-Country Skiing

Cycling

Figure Skating

Golf

Gymnastics (Artistic &
Rhythmic)

Horseshoes

Poly Hockey

Powerlifting

Soccer

Snowboarding

Snowshoeing

Softball

Speed Skating

Team Handball

Volleyball

Weightlifting

*Plus: Unified Sports®

Healthy Athletes™ Program

Young Athletes™ Program

Motor Activities™ Training
Program

Overview

- The Young Athletes™ Program is a program designed for children ages two through seven with intellectual disabilities to help improve physical, cognitive and social skills through introduction to sports. The Young Athletes™ Program provides the opportunity for children to get involved before the age of eight, when they are eligible to compete for Special Olympics Michigan.
- The activities the athletes take part in are foundational skills consisting of walking, running, balance, jumping, catching, throwing, striking, kicking and other activities.
- The program focuses on two specific levels of play. Level One includes physical activities focused on developing fundamental motor tracking and eye-hand coordination. Level Two concentrates on the application of these physical activities sharpened through play at Level One.

History of the program

- In early 2007, Special Olympics created a pilot of the program aimed to get younger children involved with Special Olympics.
- The Young Athletes™ Program made its debut in Shanghai, China during the 2007 Special Olympics World Summer Games.
- To date, Young Athletes™ has reached over 100,000 children in 21 countries and is continuing to expand.

Benefits

- In addition to the physical aspect of the program, it allows the children to interact with other athletes who may have intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities or some children without disabilities.
- The Young Athletes™ Program is fairly new to Michigan and it has provided families with the resources and support available through Special Olympics Michigan. Another benefit of the program is it provides an opportunity for parents to share information and resources with one another about raising a child with disabilities.

Why it is important

- Young Athletes is a program that emphasizes fun, no matter the athletes' athletic ability.
- Each athlete learns the importance of teamwork and builds self-confidence with each activity they accomplish.
- Additionally, the children learn how to take directions, which is beneficial if the athlete decides to enter Special Olympics Michigan.
- Involvement in Young Athletes™ makes the transition easier on the athlete because they are more familiar with interacting with other athletes.
- The Young Athletes Program embraces each child's differences and emphasizes it's okay to be different.

Funding

- Special Olympics Michigan is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization supported almost entirely through corporate funding, individual gifts, special events and without the support of state funds. All Special Olympics Michigan programs and activities are available at no cost to Michigan athletes or their families. The generosity of Michigan organizations, individuals, and statewide businesses enable the program to continue.

Donations to Special Olympics Michigan can be made at www.somi.org, by phone at (800) 644-6404 or by mail to Special Olympics Michigan, Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan 48859



www.somi.org
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