



Special Olympics Messaging & Talking Points

Special Olympics is a global organization that unleashes the human spirit through the transformative power and joy of sport, everyday around the world. Through programming in sports, health, education and community building, Special Olympics is changing the lives of people with intellectual disabilities solving the injustice, isolation, intolerance and inactivity they face throughout the world. With 229 Accredited Programs in more than 170 countries, Special Olympics is providing opportunities for more than 4 million athletes, one million volunteers and millions more people including family members, supporters, and fans.

Overview

- Special Olympics uses sports as a catalyst to reveal the champion in all of us (as athletes, volunteers, coaches, spectators, fans, supporters, etc.). Special Olympics is able to remove barriers and stigmas that people with intellectual disabilities face, to share with the community the gifts and talents of people with intellectual disabilities. Everyone who comes in touch with Special Olympics is impacted in a way that helps them strive to achieve their personal best.
- Special Olympics has a vision of a world where people with Intellectual disabilities lead healthy, vibrant lives grounded in ongoing sports and physical activity, sound nutrition and a deeply held conviction to improve, compete, achieve and demonstrate their personal best to themselves and their community.
- Special Olympic believes that every person with intellectual disabilities and their family should be empowered to preserve and understand what they need to do in order to optimize their health, and where assessable information, resources, systems and policies exist at the individual, community, national and global levels that support them in realizing healthy productive lives.
- Special Olympics is working to position people with intellectual disabilities as leaders in engendering and sustaining acceptance and respect within schools and communities through inclusive sports, fitness and youth activation programming.
- Special Olympics, through its relentless focus on benefitting people with intellectual disabilities through sports for social change, has generated awareness and catalyzed actions that result in more accepting, cohesive communities and stronger, more civil societies around the world.
- Special Olympics currently serves 4 million athletes in 229 Accredited Special Olympics Programs across more than 170 countries worldwide with 7 regional offices around the world, located in China, Egypt, Ireland, Panama, Singapore, South Africa and the United States.



- Special Olympics offers 32 Olympic-type summer and winter sports (28 Official sports and 4 Recognized sports) and holds more than 53,000 competitions annually. That's the equivalent of about 146 competitions a day.
- There are many benefits for all who participate in Special Olympics – dignity, pride, joy, justice, fitness, empowerment, friendship, acceptance and community – to name a few.
- The Special Olympics values are sportsmanship with joy, athlete leadership, unity, bravery and perseverance.
- Special Olympics is united in our commitment to inclusion, respect and dignity. We build communities of acceptance: loving families, inspired employees, coaches, volunteers and fans. Special Olympics is one Movement, across every community and every country working to foster an accepting and inclusive society for all.
- Everyday, Special Olympics athletes demonstrate courage, adhering to the Special Olympics oath, "Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt."

PROGRAM GROWTH

- Special Olympics currently serves 4 million athletes in 229 Accredited Special Olympics Programs across more than 170 countries worldwide with 7 regional offices around the world, located in China, Egypt, Ireland, Panama, Singapore, South Africa and the United States.
- During 2011, Special Olympics continued to grow steadily and expand global reach at an annual rate of 6.9 percent to over 4 million athletes, an addition of 250,000 athletes worldwide. In addition, More than 796,000 volunteers and more than 306,000 coaches supported Special Olympics athletes globally during 2011. These figures will serve as the benchmark for our strategic goal of growing Special Olympics athlete participation to 5.3 million and 530,000 certified coaches.
- In addition, key demographics to note are: approximately 65 percent of our Special Olympics athletes are of school age (8-21) and over 33 percent are adults (22+); Special Olympics serves more than 75,000 individuals in the 2-7 age group; And female athletes account for 38 percent of our total Special Olympics athlete population worldwide.
- Guided by the organization's Mission Statement, Special Olympics is determined to offer sports training and competition opportunities to all interested individuals with intellectual disabilities. Over the years, while we have significantly expanded our geographic scope of work and reached millions of new athletes, Special Olympics still serves less than 2 percent of the world's population of people with intellectual disabilities. People with intellectual disabilities are every society's most neglected population. Nearly 200 million people have an intellectual disability (ID), making it the largest disability population in the world.



SPORTS EXCELLENCE

Special Olympics focuses on delivering high-quality year-round competition opportunities in a variety of sports in an inclusive culture that stresses athletic excellence, rewards determination, emphasizes health and celebrates personal achievement.

- Special Olympics offers 32 Olympic-type summer and winter sports (28 Official sports and 4 Recognized sports) and holds nearly 53,000 competitions annually. That's the equivalent of about 146 competitions a day, a 7.6 percent increase from 2010. Special Olympics' most popular sports include athletics, football (soccer), basketball, bowling, and bocce.
- Special Olympics Unified Sports®, which brings people with and without intellectual disabilities together on the same playing field as teammates, continues to grow worldwide with nearly half a million participants. In 2011, we saw a 10 percent growth rate from 2010 with 226,076 Unified Sports Special Olympics athletes and 320,728 partners (people without intellectual disabilities) engaged in Unified Sports opportunities. Special Olympics plans to increase Unified Sports 25 percent by 2015.

BUILDING COMMUNITIES

Special Olympics builds strong, cohesive, and inclusive communities by marshaling resources, implementing diverse programming and acting as a convening power of stakeholders to drive positive attitudinal and behavioral change toward people with intellectual disabilities, strengthening the fabric of society.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

- Special Olympics provides a positive venue for families to become part of a caring community, and to be a champion for the movement. Family members recruit new athletes, coach teams, transport athletes, raise funds, officiate games, chaperone events and train other volunteers. They serve as a source of connection for other family members of people with intellectual disabilities and increasingly are advocating for the needs of their athletes.

HEALTH & PUBLIC POLICY

- Special Olympics promotes the overall well-being of people with intellectual disabilities through programs that ensure ongoing access to quality, community-based healthcare services, highlighted by free health screenings at Special Olympics competitions, games and other venues.
- Special Olympics Healthy Athletes® is a program that provides free health screenings in a fun, welcoming environment that removes the anxiety and trepidation people with intellectual disabilities often experience when faced with a visit to a doctor or dentist. Our impact on the health and well-being of Special Olympics athletes around the world is great, in some cases saving lives by discovering unknown health issues or providing health care that otherwise would not be available.



- Special Olympics Healthy Athletes® not only serves athletes but also trains health care professionals who then go back to their practices with increased knowledge of and compassion for people with intellectual disabilities.
- Despite a mistaken belief that people with intellectual disabilities receive the same or better health care than others, they typically receive sub-standard care or virtually no health care at all. Health screenings have found that Special Olympics athletes are at increased risk of secondary health issues:
 - 39% have obvious, untreated tooth decay.
 - 53% are in need of physical therapy.
 - 20% have low bone density
 - 26% fail hearing tests.
 - 49% have at least one kind of skin or nail condition.
- Special Olympics is the leader in cutting-edge research and evaluation to better understand the many challenges faced by people with intellectual disabilities and the significant impact of Special Olympics on their lives. This research is a driving force for realizing improved policies, laws and rights for people with intellectual disabilities around the world.

YOUTH ACTIVATION

- **Curriculum for change:** Get Into It® (K-12), an online curriculum, educates youth about intellectual disabilities while creating positive attitudes of inclusion, value and respect. SO Get Into® also encourages students without disabilities to participate in Special Olympics, bringing together young people who otherwise might not have the opportunity to meet and to learn from one another.
- Children and young people are one of the most open-minded audiences for social change. Using sports as its platform, **Project UNIFY®** is a dynamic collaboration between Special Olympics and school communities that engages young people with and without intellectual disabilities to promote attitudes and behaviors of acceptance and inclusion in schools. Project UNIFY builds and strengthens partnerships between local Special Olympics Programs and participating schools to create “Project UNIFY Schools.” Through Project UNIFY®, young people with and without intellectual disabilities are truly integrated, playing side-by-side on sports teams and coming together in dialogue to discuss topics such as reversing negative stereotypes.
- The “Spread the Word to End the Word®” Campaign is a grassroots effort to get people around the world, including the entertainment industry, to stop using the “R-word” (“retard” and comparable words in different cultures). The campaign targets students through school events and social networking, inviting them to sign an online pledge, and spread the word on their campuses. To date, nearly 300,000 people have taken the online pledge while millions have signed petitions, banners and taken oaths around the world to stop hurtful language and banish prejudices.



CONNECTING FANS & FUNDS

Special Olympics maintains the ambitious goal of doubling operating revenue worldwide over the next five years. In addition, we aim to take advantage of every opportunity to translate communications into strategic storytelling, passive spectating into fan engagement, and community support into real collaborative and breakthrough fundraising.

CORPORATE SUPPORTERS

Corporate partners are essential in helping Special Olympics fulfill its mission. Through the generosity of cash, in-kind donations, volunteers and awareness, we are able to share the power of sport with the world. Our corporate team works with companies of all sizes with a solid history and strong brand image, including The Coca Cola Company, Procter & Gamble, Mattel, Hilton, Finish Line and Safeway.

GOVERNMENT SUPPORTERS

Special Olympics has excellent working relationships with governments and governmental agencies around the world. For example, Special Olympics is working with the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability to create more employment opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities. In Europe, the European Union is supporting the development of Special Olympics Programs across the 27 E.U. Member States.

COMMUNITY SUPPORTERS

Special Olympics has deep relationships in the communities where it works. The Law Enforcement Torch Run® (LETR) for Special Olympics is the movement's largest grass-roots fundraiser, having raised more than US\$370 million since its inception more than 30 years ago, encompassing a variety of events including Torch Runs, Polar Plunge events and the World's Largest Truck Convoy fundraisers. More than 85,000 international law enforcement officers have carried the Flame of Hope. Another important partnership is with the Lions Club, which has raised more than \$10 million to provide prescription eyewear to more than 200,000 athletes around the world.

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTERS

Millions of people across the globe support Special Olympics through donations, volunteerism and advocacy. Whether a monthly pledge donor, a volunteer at a local competition, a teacher promoting tolerance and acceptance in the classroom, or a campus volunteer recruiting fellow students to end the derogatory use of the "R-word," our individual supporters are vital members of the global movement. They have taken a stand for dignity, acceptance and the human race that ultimately creates a better world for us all.

A VERY SPECIAL CHRISTMAS®

Through bold innovation and enormous generosity, the record industry has made beautiful music benefiting Special Olympics since 1987. From its first release to the latest recording, the *A Very Special Christmas* record series has raised more than \$100 million as we celebrate 25 years. Funds raised through the album sales and downloads are granted to catalyze growth of Special Olympics internationally (in places like Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Morocco, Egypt, Syria, Yemen, China, Brazil, Mexico, Russia, etc) as well as in hard-to-reach urban centers of the United States and the world.



SPECIAL OLYMPICS VALUES:

SPORTSMANSHIP WITH JOY

We believe in the transformative power of sports. We embrace the purity of sports at all levels as we witness incredible personal athletic triumphs that shatter stereotypes.

ATHLETE LEADERSHIP

We empower athletes to be contributing and respected members of Special Olympics and society. We support athlete-leaders on and off the playing field.

UNITY

We are united in our commitment to inclusion, respect and dignity. We build communities of acceptance: loving families, inspired employees, coaches, volunteers and fans. We are one Movement, across every community and every country.

BRAVERY

We live our athlete oath: "Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt."

PERSEVERANCE

We are capable, tenacious and resilient. We don't give up on ourselves or each other.

UPDATED BOILER PLATE:

Below is a standard paragraph or boilerplate about Special Olympics to be used when describing the movement. Typically, this paragraph is used in press releases.

About Special Olympics

Special Olympics is an international organization that unleashes the human spirit through the transformative power and joy of sports everyday around the world. Through work in sports, health education and community building, Special Olympics is addressing inactivity, injustice, intolerance and social isolation by encouraging and empowering people with intellectual disabilities which leads to a more welcoming and inclusive society. Founded in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, the Special Olympics movement has grown from a few hundred athletes to nearly four million athletes in over 170 countries. With the support of more than one million coaches and volunteers, Special Olympics is able to deliver 32 Olympic-type sports and more than 53,000 competitions throughout the year. Visit Special Olympics at www.specialolympics.org. Engage with us on: [Twitter @specialolympics](https://twitter.com/specialolympics); fb.com/specialolympics; youtube.com/specialolympicshq, and specialolympicsblog.wordpress.com.

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