



Special Olympics

Rhode Island

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Special Olympics Rhode Island

Who We Are

Special Olympics Rhode Island (SORI) is a non-profit organization providing sports training and athletic competition for children as well as adults with intellectual disabilities. Currently 2,700 athletes and thousands of volunteers, friends and family members take part in SORI activities.

Our Mission

Special Olympics Rhode Island (SORI), a program of Special Olympics Inc., provides year round training and athletic competition in over 25 Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities and provides them with continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness skills, express courage, experience joy, and participate in the sharing of gifts, skills, friendship with their families, other Special Olympic athletes, and the community.

Our Philosophy

Special Olympics is founded on the belief that people with intellectual disabilities can, with proper instruction and encouragement, learn, enjoy, and benefit from participation in individual and team sports, adapted as necessary to meet the needs of those with special mental and physical challenges.

Special Olympics believes that consistent training is indispensable to the development of sports skills and that competition among those with equal abilities is the most appropriate means of testing those skills, measuring progress and providing incentives for personal growth.

Our Athletes

Over 2,700 children and adults with intellectual disabilities and closely related disabilities participate on local teams throughout Rhode Island. Athletes range in age from 8 to 80 and are of all ability levels. They do not need to be knowledgeable about sports or have prior athletic experience.

Competitions We Offer

Special Olympics Rhode Island offers competition in approximately 25 official and demonstration sports. Additionally, three Area Games, State Winter Games and State Summer Games are held annually.

Sports We Offer

Winter (last week of November to first week of March) sports offered include: alpine skiing, nordic skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, basketball and unified volleyball.

Spring (first week of March to Summer Games) sports offered include: athletics, aquatics, cycling, M.A.T.P., unified bowling, unified soccer, powerlifting and Project Unify Basketball.

Summer (first week of June to last week of August) sports offered include: unified sailing, unified golf and unified softball.

Fall (last week of August to Thanksgiving) sports offered include: cross-country running, duckpin bowling, soccer, unified basketball, tennis, flag football, ballroom dancing and Project Unify Volleyball.

SORI Sponsors

Special Olympics Rhode Island could not continue to provide quality sports training and competition to more than 2,700 children and adults with intellectual disabilities in Rhode Island without the generous and continued support of our sponsors.

As a tax-exempt non-profit organization, SORI relies on corporations, clubs and organizations to ensure the continuance of its programs. Contrary to popular belief, Special Olympics Rhode Island is not an agency of the United Way, is not funded by the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation, and does not receive funds from the U.S. Government. It raises the needed funds through a variety of community-based activities that receive financial support from individuals, corporations, foundations and special events.

In addition to making a significant difference in the lives of our athletes, sponsors will gain many valuable benefits

such as increased awareness and public image of their organization as one that gives back to the community. As well as, heightened employee and customer enthusiasm and pride through the involvement of a worthwhile charity.

The Benefits

Benefits of participation in Special Olympics include improved physical fitness and motor skills, a more positive self-image, friendships and increased family support. Special Olympics athletes carry these benefits with them into their daily lives at home, in the classroom, on the job and in the community. Families who volunteer become stronger as they learn a greater appreciation of the athlete's talent. Volunteers also find out what good friends the athletes can be. In addition, everyone learns about the capabilities of people with mental retardation.

A 1995 Yale University study revealed that Special Olympics athletes perform better in school, at work and at home the longer they participate in the year round program. The study, the first to focus on the emotional goals of the Special Olympics program, measured social competency skills such as participating in community activities and developing close friendships. It compared athletes who actively competed in Special Olympics games against a control group of people with mental challenges who were not involved in the program.

Our History

The Special Olympics concept was born in the early 1960's when Eunice Kennedy Shriver started a day camp for people with mental challenges. She observed the great joy campers experienced when playing sports and resolved to create a program which would both meet physical fitness needs and boost self-esteem. Through her inspiration 1,000 athletes from 26 states and Canada took part in the First International Special Olympics Games held at Soldier Field in Chicago, IL, July 19-20, 1968. Since that year, millions of children and adults with mental challenges have participated in Special Olympics events.

Around the World

There are more than 160 countries around the world that contain accredited Special Olympics programs. In addition, all 50 US states and the District of Columbia have established Special Olympics chapters.

Over 15,000 Games, meets and tournaments in both summer and winter sports are held each year in communities worldwide. Chapter and National Games culminate in International Games every two years, which alternate between winter and summer sports.

Special Olympics Uniqueness

Special Olympics, although similar to most other sporting organizations, is unique in six major areas:

- Special Olympics does not charge a fee to athletes or their families to train or compete.
- A variety of sports opportunities are provided for all ability levels.
- Ability groupings are created through a process called ability divisioning to provide equitable competition (evenness) for all athletes within each ability grouping (division).
- Awards are provided to all participants who compete.
- All ability levels are eligible for advancement to higher levels of competition. The established criteria for athlete advancement are based on order of finish for each division and random draw.
- Special Olympics maintains a ratio of at least one coach to every four athletes.

About Unified Sports

This program brings together athletes with and without intellectual disabilities of similar age and ability to train and compete on the same teams. Founded in 1987, Special Olympics Unified Sports fosters the inclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities into school and community sport programs.

About Motor Activities Training Program

Special Olympics created its Motor Activities training Program, developed by physical educators, physical therapists and reaction therapists. M.A.T.P. emphasizes training and participation rather than competition. M.A.T.P. is part of the Special Olympics commitment to offer sports training to all individuals with intellectual disabilities. Events include mobility and dexterity exercises as well as aquatics with the main goal to help athletes develop the skills necessary to participate in official Special Olympics sports.

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***"Let me win,
but if I cannot win,
let me brave in the attempt"***

Special Olympics Oath