



## **Special Olympics Oklahoma**

### **HISTORY**

Special Olympics was founded by Eunice Kennedy Shriver. The first International Special Olympics Games were held in 1968 at Soldier Field in Chicago.

There are programs in all 50 states and more than 4.6 million athletes in 226 Accredited Special Olympics Programs across more than 170 countries worldwide with 7 regional offices around the world, located in Africa, Asia Pacific, East Asia, Europe-Eurasia, Latin America, Middle East-North Africa and North America. Special Olympics, Inc. is a non-profit international organization located in Washington, DC.

Oklahoma's first Special Olympics event was an athletics competition at the University of Tulsa in 1969. In 1972, Special Olympics Oklahoma was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and is governed by a state-wide Board of Directors. Special Olympics Oklahoma is authorized and accredited by Special Olympics, Inc., for the benefit of citizens with intellectual disabilities.

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

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.

### **THE GOAL**

The goal of Special Olympics is for all persons with intellectual disabilities to have the opportunity to become useful and productive citizens who are accepted and respected by their families, friends and in their communities.



## What is Special Olympics?

*Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in attempt.*

Special Olympics Athlete Oath

**Special Olympics is a year-round program of sports training and athletic competition for children and adults with intellectual disabilities.** Special Olympics was created in 1968 by the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation. The first International Special Olympics Games were organized by Eunice Kennedy Shriver and held in 1968 at Soldier Field in Chicago. There were 1,000 athletes at that initial event; today, Special Olympics currently serves **more than 4.6 million athletes in 226 Accredited Special Olympics Programs** across more than **170 countries worldwide** with **7 regional offices** around the world.

**Special Olympics Oklahoma was started in 1969** and incorporated in 1972 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. Today, Special Olympics Oklahoma benefits over 10,500 individuals, and is supported by over 13,000 volunteer coaches, sponsors, donors and volunteers conducting more than 175 sports competitions and training clinics every year.

**Special Olympics Oklahoma offers 20 official sports** including traditional and Unified® sports. Competitive sports are: Alpine Skiing/Cross Country Skiing, Aquatics, Athletics, Basketball, Bocce, Bowling, Cheerleading, Cornhole, Esports, Equestrian, Flag Football, Golf, Horseshoes, Powerlifting, Snowshoeing, Speed Skating, Soccer, Softball, Tennis, and Volleyball. **Unified Sports** partners athletes with and without intellectual disabilities, of similar age and ability. **Motor Activities Training Program** is for individuals with severe and profound limitations. The Young Athletes Program is for children 3 through 7 years old and is designed to introduce children with intellectual disabilities and their families to the Special Olympics Oklahoma family.

**Competitions** are conducted in the spring and fall in each of the 14 geographic areas throughout the state. Athletes then qualify to compete in four state-wide competitions; Fall Games (October in Stillwater), Winter Games (January in Norman), Summer Games (May in Stillwater), and Soccer. World Games are held every two years, alternating between Winter and Summer Games.



**Area Management Teams**, from the 14 geographic areas, administer programs across the state and are comprised of volunteers who work year-round to plan, organize and conduct sports training and competition events for athletes and coaches in their area.

**Participation** in Special Olympics helps athletes remain physically active, while increasing their self-esteem and self-confidence. Athletes attend dances, movie nights and other activities to help develop social skills. Athletes and their families network and develop relationships with other athletes' families, sponsors, coaches, and volunteers.

**Special Olympics Oklahoma** relies almost 100% on private resources to meet its annual budget. The organization invests in an annual audit of all finances. 90% of all funds directly benefit Program expenses. Special Olympics is not a United Way agency and does not receive state grant dollars. Special Olympics Oklahoma is dependent on private gifts from individuals, corporations, associations, private foundations and other sources.

**Everyone benefits** from participating in Special Olympics Oklahoma. Athletes carry the benefits from their involvement in Special Olympics with them in their daily lives at home, in the class room, on the job and in the community. Families are strengthened and the community increases its understanding, acceptance and respect of these individuals.

- Physical, social and psychological development
- Improved physical fitness and motor skills
- Greater self-confidence
- Positive self-image
- Friendships and increased family support.

Special Olympics unleashes the human spirit through the transformative power and joy of sports every day around the world.