

Special Olympics
Tennessee



Special Olympics Tennessee

Volunteer General Orientation



Joanne Drumright, Executive VP

Sean Stake, VP of Sports

Victoria Mehren, Director of Competitions

Questions? Email sports@specialolympicstn.org
or visit www.SpecialOlympicsTN.org

Mission



SOTN provides **year-round sports training and athletic competition** in a variety of Olympic-style 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.

Athlete Oath: “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.”

What We Believe

People with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) can learn and excel in individual and team sports.

Proper instruction and encouragement, consistent training, and fair implementation of rules are necessary to the development of sport skills.

Families and communities are strengthened through participation and observation, creating environments of inclusion, respect, and acceptance of all.



How We Started



Special Olympics got its start in the 1960s, when Eunice Kennedy Shriver started a day camp for people with ID in her backyard in Maryland.

The first International Special Olympics Games were held at Soldier Field in Chicago in 1968. Over 1000 athletes from 26 states and Canada competed.

Special Olympics is now in 200 countries and jurisdictions with approximately 7 million athletes and partners participating.



Who Can Train and Compete?

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Competition eligibility begins at 8 years old. 6- and 7-year-olds can train but not compete. Children ages 2-7 can participate in the [Young Athletes](#) training program.

There is no upper age limit - athletes can continue to participate as long as they wish.

Athletes must have a valid Medical Form and Release on file with their local Area Program. These forms must be signed by a medical professional and are good for three years from the date of signature.

Participation is always free to all eligible athletes.

What We Offer

Athletes and Unified partners train and compete at the local level, and may also advance to competition at the State, National or World Games levels. USA Games are offered every 4 years and World Games occur every 2 years on a rotating Summer/Winter basis.

We provide sports opportunities for all ability levels:

- Athletes are divisioned for equitable competition in groups of 3-8
- Awards for all participants
- Random draw for advancement to national and international levels of play

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Unified Sports



Unified sports take people with ID (athletes) and without ID (Unified partners) and place them on the same teams and playing fields, creating communities of inclusion, unity, respect and tolerance.

Unified sports break down stereotypes and misconceptions in a really fun way.

Unified partners can be any age 8+. For team sports, they should be approximately equal in skill level to the athletes and other partners on their team.

Unified sports offered in Tennessee: basketball, bocce, bowling, flag football, golf, track, and volleyball.

What is Intellectual Disability?

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An intellectual disability is a condition that is characterized by limitation in individual's intellectual abilities. Some examples include but are not limited to: Down Syndrome, autism, cerebral palsy, and brain damage resulting from illness or injury.

Individuals with ID, with the right tools, supports and training, are fully capable of achieving their goals, whether it be on the playing field, at school, in the workplace, or in their community. They work hard and deserve the respect of their peers and community members.

Language Matters



Special Olympics participants are referred to as athletes. Focus on an athlete's abilities, not their disabilities.

Use people-first language. Example: "person with a disability," not "disabled person"; "person with Down syndrome" not "Down's". See the person before their disability!

SO athletes are both children and adults - do not use the term "kids."

Do not use terms such as "unfortunate" or "suffering from ID." ID does not have to be life-defining in a negative way.

Always avoid use of the "R-word." This word is hurtful and perpetuates negative and untrue stereotypes of people with ID.

Why Volunteer?



Special Olympics is a grassroots organization, and volunteers are the backbone. Without volunteers, Special Olympics couldn't exist.

Volunteers serve in a day-of (Class B) or ongoing (Class A) capacity.

Many Special Olympics volunteers come back year after year to share in the athletes' experiences and growth, making many new friends along the way.

Volunteer training is available and there are multiple opportunities to grow as a volunteer through the organization.

Your support directly impacts the 18,000+ athletes that Special Olympics Tennessee serves.

What is a Class A Volunteer?



A Class A Volunteer is an ongoing volunteer who has close contact with athletes on a regular basis. In supervising and working with athletes, these volunteers are placed in a position of trust and authority.

Examples of a Class A Volunteer include: coach, Area Director, local program management team member, local or state Games management team member, chaperones, Unified partners, etc.

Requirements for Class A Volunteers: background check renewed every 3 years, Protective Behaviors training.

*Note: coaches must complete additional trainings.



What is a Day-of Volunteer?

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Day-of volunteers make Special Olympics events (at the local and state levels) possible! These individuals provide short-term support at competitions or events and do not have close, unsupervised contact with athletes.

Roles may take place on or off the playing field, including sport roles such as timers, recorders, officials, etc. and non-sport roles such as check-in, dance, Olympic town, water team, etc. Available roles are posted at www.SpecialOlympicsTn.VolunteerHub.com.

When signing up on VolunteerHub, volunteers must virtually sign a waiver. Minors must have waivers signed by their parent.

SOTN Sports Competitions

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January: Regional Swimming - Lebanon, TN and State Winter Games - Gatlinburg, TN

March: Regional and State Basketball Tournaments - Nashville, TN

April: Local Area Spring Games - locations across TN

May: State Summer Games - Nashville, TN

May-September: Regional and State Golf Tournaments - locations across TN

Fall: State Flag Football - Nashville, TN

Fall: Local Area Bowling - locations across TN

October: State Bowling - Columbia, TN

SOTN Programs



Special Olympics Tennessee offers more than just sports!

Unified Champion Schools: students at K-college campuses across Tennessee participate in Unified sports, whole school engagement, and youth leadership initiatives to build campuses and communities of inclusion and respect for all. Contact Lauren Simpson, Manager of UCS, lsimpson@specialolympicstn.org for more or to get your school involved.

Young Athletes: children ages 2-7 with and without disabilities come together to participate in fun activities that build their motor skills and help in development while making friends and prepping to join a sports team when they turn 8. Contact Stacie Marshall, smarshall@specialolympicstn.org for more.

Health: we aim to build healthy inclusive communities through initiatives such as free health screenings, family education forums, provider trainings and more. Contact Aisha Eiger, aeiger@specialolympicstn.org for more.

SOTN Special Events



February: [Polar Plunges](#) - locations across TN

Spring: [Music City Blitz](#) - flag football fundraiser - Nissan Stadium, Nashville, TN

Summer: [Corporate Challenge](#) - intramural sport fundraiser - Nashville, TN

Throughout the Year: [Law Enforcement Torch Run](#) activities and fundraising events throughout the state.

Click here to view [other special events](#).

- Contact Amy Parker, aparker@specialolympicstn.org for information on all Law Enforcement Torch Run events.
- Contact Christian McCormick, cmccormick@specialolympicstn.org or Beth Teegarden, bteegarden@specialolympicstn.org for all other Special Events.

Thank You!

The 18,000+ athletes of Special Olympics Tennessee thank you for your support and dedication to our organization. We look forward to seeing you soon!

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