

OUTREACH INITIATIVES

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ATHLETE OUTREACH—AN OVERVIEW

Since its founding in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Special Olympics has reached millions of athletes with cognitive disabilities in the United States and in more than 170 countries. There are local Special Olympics programs in more than 25,000 communities in the United States alone.

According to a general analysis, at least three percent of the world's population has cognitive disabilities. Utilizing current Census Bureau figures, this would correlate to more than 169,000 individuals with cognitive disabilities within Wisconsin alone. Special Olympics Wisconsin (SOWI) currently serves nearly 10,000 athletes through 200 local Special Olympics Agencies which is approximately 6% of the potential. The need for continued growth is clear.

It is not realistic to believe that everyone with cognitive disabilities will be part of Special Olympics, but it is our mission to make Special Olympics available to those who choose to participate.

SOWI continues to focus their athlete recruitment efforts on improving services to existing Agencies through the work of the Agency Management Committee and the implementation of the Agency Management Program. It is our hope that by supporting the existing Agencies and documenting plans for new Agencies, we are laying the foundation for future growth.

As part of SOWI's efforts to serve existing athletes, SOWI has taken action to address the issue of why existing athletes leave the program. To this end, SOWI contacted athletes whose Application for Participation had expired to find out if they want to stay involved, and if not, why they were leaving.

The results were interesting, but not surprising. According to the survey, the main reasons athletes leave are: they moved and did not transfer to a new Agency (11%); the athlete is in poor health (7%); the athlete is too busy or does not have time (6%).

With Young Athletes™, Camp Shriver, the R-Word campaign, and Get Into It™ taking off across the state, as well as a desired resurgence of Unified Sports®, all the components of Project UNIFY, we will begin to see our numbers of school age athletes increase. Additionally because of the inclusive factor of these programs, we will be making progress towards better school climates and social justice. It also alerts SOWI to the fact that we could retain more athletes by following up with athletes who move to new areas of the state to get them hooked up with an Agency in their new home community. (As Agency managers, you are the closest to this issue and can help the athlete transition by notifying the Regional office when athletes move.)

While some Agencies are searching for more athletes to create a viable program, others are straining at the seams from over enrollment. SOWI understands and respects the different demands facing Agencies, and in turn empowers Agency managers through the following guideline:

“An Agency may not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, religion, nation, origin of political policy; however, an Agency manager may deny an athlete participation in their program if the Agency has reached the maximum capacity for providing a safe, quality program. In this case, it is expected that the Agency manager will contact the Regional office to inform them of the situation and will refer any potential athletes to the appropriate Regional office.”

ATHLETE OUTREACH OPTIONS

We rely on your expertise in knowing your Agency and which strategies are most appropriate for expanding your athlete enrollment. This list should be viewed as a menu. You can pick and choose whatever strategies or information fit your specific needs.

The Regional office has materials for an Agency manager who wants to recruit new athletes or volunteers. Additionally, the Regional office can provide DVDs or be a technical resource to an Agency manager who is contacting groups in the community.

Special Olympics Programs (descriptions included in this section of the handbook)

- Young Athletes Program™ (YAP)
- Traditional Special Olympics sports programs
- Get Into It™
- Unified Sports® programs
- School Sports Partnerships
- Fans Clubs
- Motor Activities Training Programs (MATP)
- Healthy Athletes Initiatives (HAI) *
- Camp Shriver
- R-Word Campaign
- Project Unify

Target Areas for Athlete Recruitment

- Pre-school and Elementary Schools
 - Introduce YAP for two to seven year olds to school administrators
 - Introduce Project UNIFY
 - Introduce Get Into It™ to Principal or Special Education Teachers
 - Encourage schools to offer Special Olympics as an extracurricular activity
 - Make Special Olympics an extension of physical education curriculum
- Secondary Schools
 - Introduce Get Into It™ to Principal or Special Education Teachers
 - Introduce Project UNIFY
 - Establish sports teams coached by high school students, faculty and coaches for Special Olympics athletes
 - Create Fans Clubs which involve high school students who volunteer on a regular basis assisting Special Olympics athletes in practice and competition
 - Promote the Unified Sports® program to bring together athletes with and without cognitive disabilities to practice and compete on the same teams. Unified Sports® can be part of an interscholastic or intramural after-school league at the junior high or high school level
 - Involve athletes and students to coordinate the R-Word campaign
- Parks and Recreation Departments
 - Introduce the Camp Shriver model to be incorporated into existing day camp programs
 - Encourage parks and recreation departments to include Special Olympics training, competition and coach's training schools among the activities they offer
 - Work with them to gain access to facilities, transportation, publications and events
 - Encourage them to run YAP
- Work Settings
 - Establish Special Olympics training programs as employee fitness programs
 - Have employers enable and encourage employees to participate in local Special Olympics programs
 - Start Unified Sports® programs to generate interaction between employees with and without cognitive disabilities in integrated workplaces.
- Families and Athletes
 - Introduce families with children with disabilities ages two to seven to YAP family kits
 - Continue to build the Global Messengers program in which Special Olympics athletes are selected and trained to become effective public speakers to express the benefits of Special Olympics (see ALPs section of this handbook).
 - Encourage athletes and family currently participating in Special Olympics to recruit other athletes and families.
 - Establish family committees wherever there is a Special Olympics program

*Introduce Healthy Athletes Initiatives at all age levels and outreach targets

PROJECT UNIFY

What is Project UNIFY®?

In 2008, Special Olympics North America was awarded a grant from the US Department of Education with a goal to activate communities where all young people are agents of change, who foster advocacy for people with cognitive disabilities. To accomplish this goal, the organization formed “Project UNIFY,” a program that seeks to utilize existing state Special Olympics programs and initiatives in combination with schools.

In the first three years of Project UNIFY, Special Olympics Wisconsin (SOWI) launched exciting inclusive initiatives like the Young Athletes Program (YAP) for children 2-7 years old, Camp Shriver (an inclusive summer day camp), and a Unified Sports basketball league in conjunction with summer enrichment activities. The data gathered from schools nationally will take us to the next step.

What is Project UNIFY doing now?

We have learned from the data that the guiding principles first proposed to the Department of Education for Project UNIFY have been confirmed. For Special Olympics to be transformative within schools, state programs need to go beyond simply providing students the opportunity to engage in single, SO-specific initiatives. It is the connection between SO initiatives, along with the youth and school’s involvement in the design and implementation of Project UNIFY that can foster a more inclusive and welcoming environment for students with intellectual disabilities. We also understand how important it is for the state Program to collaborate with educators in identifying what role Project UNIFY can play in meeting their state, district and individual school’s strategic goals, whether it be promoting school climate, developing physical fitness, building character, preventing bullying, enhancing student engagement, or any other important school reform.

As a result, the following definition of a Project UNIFY School has emerged:

A Project UNIFY School: A sustaining Project UNIFY School with a combination of at least three Project UNIFY components; sports, youth leadership/advocacy, and a school-wide activity. In a “Project UNIFY School” there is an understanding that Project UNIFY is not just an incident or event that happens for one day, or a single experience, but rather year-long or seasonal activities. In a Project UNIFY school there is an expectation that acceptance and inclusion are everyday occurrences that change entire schools and impact the whole student body.

What will be happening with Project UNIFY next year?

Special Olympics Wisconsin will enthusiastically participate in the Project UNIFY grant program for the 2011-2012 academic school year. Wisconsin schools will have the opportunity to apply for sub-grant funding through the SOWI office by submitting an application with a proposed project budget. All grant materials will be available on the SOWI website this fall. For more information contact Jeanne Hrovat at jhrovat@specialolympicswisconsin.org or (800) 552-1324, extension 5673.

YOUNG ATHLETES™

Young Athletes™ is a relatively new initiative which introduces children, ages two to seven, with cognitive disabilities, their peers and families to the world of Special Olympics by pursuing the following goals:

- Engage children with cognitive disabilities through developmentally appropriate play activities designed to foster physical, cognitive and social development;
- Welcome family members of children with cognitive disabilities to the Special Olympics network of support;
- Raise awareness about the abilities of children with cognitive disabilities through inclusive peer participation, demonstrations and other events.

This program is designed to address two specific levels of play. Level 1 includes physical activities focused on developing fundamental motor tracking and eye-hand coordination. Level 2 concentrates on the application of these physical activities through a sports skills activity program and developing skills consistent with Special Olympics sports play. The activities consist of foundational skills, walking and running, balance and jumping, trapping and catching, throwing, striking, kicking and advanced skills.

Young Athletes™ is a versatile program that can work in various learning situations. The program is designed for families to play with their young athletes at home in a fun atmosphere but is also appropriate for preschools, schools and playgroups.

This initiative is modeled after the traditional Special Olympics program. Sites are required to practice the Young Athletes™ Program a minimum of eight sessions and it is recommended that these sessions are conducted over eight consecutive weeks. Through practicing the various skills, Young Athletes are able to build on their strengths each week. After completing at least eight sessions, Young Athletes participate in a Culminating Event, much like a District or State Games. Here, athletes demonstrate the skills they've learned or improved upon over the weeks and participate in an awards ceremony in which all Young Athletes are acknowledged. It is our hope that by having a similar model to our traditional program, those that continue to participate in Special Olympics will have an easy transition to a local Agency when they turn eight years old.

The Young Athletes™ program includes several resources to guide family members, educators and other professionals as they conduct Young Athletes™ with their children, brothers, sisters, cousins, grandchildren, students or patients. Sites are able to sustain a Young Athletes™ Program by providing a Site Coordinator (much like an Agency manager), facility, volunteers, and children between the ages of two and seven receive a kit, curriculum, ribbons, and more to conduct the program successfully at no cost. Additionally, families with a child diagnosed with a cognitive disability or delay and are unable to attend one of our current Young Athletes sites are eligible for a family kit at no cost to use at home. Support materials are available by contacting the Director of Youth Initiatives by calling (800) 924 -5202 or by email at kkirsch@specialolympicswisconsin.org. For more information visit SpecialOlympicsWisconsin.org.

HEALTHY ATHLETES PROGRAM

Mission

The mission of the Special Olympics Healthy Athletes program is to improve, through better health and fitness, each athlete's ability to train and compete in Special Olympics.

How it works

Special Olympics Wisconsin (SOWI) offers free screenings for athletes attending various State competitions in Special Smiles, Healthy Hearing, Opening Eyes, Fun Fitness, Fit Feet, Health Promotion and MedFest. To be eligible to participate in these programs, athletes or their guardians sign a release form, which is incorporated in the general Official Special Olympics Release Form. The athlete must also have a current medical form on file at the Headquarters office. Athletes do not have to be participating at the State games in order to take advantage of the Healthy Athletes Program. Any athlete with a current medical on file at the Headquarters office can participate.

The providers (medical doctors, dentists, dental hygienists, optometrists, opticians, physical therapists, audiologists, podiatrists, dieticians, registered nurses and more) see the athletes in an environment familiar to them and perform exams in a setting among the athlete's peers. The potentially nerve-wracking experience of seeing a doctor is well received by the majority of athletes in this setting.

Added Benefits

While athletes are certainly the focus of this program, medical professionals and students are given an opportunity to teach each other techniques for screening members of this population, or to learn the techniques from their peers. Many of the volunteers have been deeply impacted by their experience.

Healthy Athletes Disciplines Offered

Fit Feet: Fit Feet was developed in collaboration with the American Academy of Podiatric Sports Medicine to evaluate and screen foot and ankle deformities of athletes and to provide education in proper footwear and care of the feet and toes.

FUNfitness: Physical therapy professionals provide screening and education on flexibility, functional strength, and balance and advise athletes on good fitness programs for risk prevention and for optimal function in sports training and competition.

Health Promotion: Professionals educate athletes about nutrition and exercise, as well as bone health, smoking cessation and sun safety using interactive activities and motivational information to encourage behavior change. Blood pressure and bone mineral density screenings are also available at Health Promotions.

Healthy Hearing: Certified audiologists assess athlete hearing and provide external ear canal inspection, evoked otoacoustic emissions screening, tympanometry and pure tone screening for those with identified need. Referrals may include further testing of middle ear problems or management of hearing loss or hearing aids, molded ear plugs or earwax removal.

Lions Club Opening Eyes®: Lions Clubs International brings eye care professionals in to offer vision health tests and possible refraction, prescription eyeglasses, prescription protective sports eyewear, and referral for follow-up care.

Special Smiles: Dental professionals provide screenings, health education and prevention services, and refer athletes for treatment and follow-up care. Fitted mouth guards are provided if needed.

MedFest®: Programs conduct standard sports physicals required for participation in Special Olympics events. These screenings permit new athletes to register and assure continued eligibility of existing athletes.

For more information on the Healthy Athletes Program, contact the Director of Wellness Initiatives at mschoenbrodt@specialolympicswisconsin.org or by calling (608) 442-5676 or visit SpecialOlympicsWisconsin.org.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS UNIFIED SPORTS®

Unified Sports allows athletes with and without cognitive disabilities to compete together.

Introduction

Special Olympics Unified Sports is an additional means for carrying out and fulfilling the mission of Special Olympics. The Special Olympics athlete is all-important to the mission and experiencing new, varied, integrated and more challenging levels of athletic achievement and opportunity, e.g., Unified Sports is crucial in the continuing evolution of Special Olympics athletes in communities throughout the world.

Definition of Unified Sports

Unified Sports is a program that combines approximately equal numbers of Special Olympics athletes with peer athletes without cognitive disabilities on sports teams for training and competition. Furthermore, all players (Athletes and Special Partners*) are of similar age and ability. Athletes in this program need to have the necessary skill level to participate in the sport so they can be appropriately matched with their Special Partners.

Unified Sports is an important program because it expands sports opportunities for athletes seeking new challenges. In addition, Unified Sports dramatically increases inclusion in the community by helping to break down the barriers that have historically kept people with and without cognitive disabilities apart. At the same time, Unified Sports provides a valuable sports opportunity to individuals with cognitive disabilities who are not presently involved with Special Olympics. This is especially true for those with mild disabilities and for those in communities where there are not enough Special Olympics athletes to conduct team sports.

Unified Sports has become an important addition to the overall Special Olympics program and has helped further reach its mission.

*Descriptors like Special Athletes (athletes with cognitive disabilities) and Special Partners (athletes without cognitive disabilities) are sometimes necessary to differentiate the two groups in Special Olympics literature; however, Unified Sports program leaders are encouraged to refer to all athletes as teammates.

Summary

Unified Sports is a program endorsed and developed by Special Olympics Inc. Currently, Special Olympics Wisconsin offers Unified Golf during the Outdoor Sports season and Unified basketball teams are encouraged to attend the Milwaukee Public Schools Unified Tournament in August.

SCHOOL SPORTS PARTNERSHIPS

Special Olympics School Sports Partnerships are an expansion of the existing after-school sports programs that include training and competition for students with cognitive disabilities in conjunction with the interscholastic sports teams.

Supervision is provided by the school's head coach in a particular sport or an assistant coach specifically assigned to coach the Special Olympics teams. District policy determines the size of the coaching staff, compensation, etc.

Athletes without cognitive disabilities from varsity and/or junior varsity sports teams serve as peer coaches, scrimmage teammates and boosters during competition.

In the Special Olympics School Sports Partnership, athletes with cognitive disabilities are able to earn athletic letters, wear school uniforms, ride the team bus, and are recognized in school sports awards ceremonies. Athletes represent their school in Special Olympics local, Regional, District, Sectional and State competitions.

Special Olympics Athletes

- Participate in conditioning programs with varsity/junior varsity athletes
- Practice skills with peer coaching by varsity/junior varsity athletes
- Scrimmage with varsity/junior varsity athletes, or mixed team of athletes drawn from all sports teams

Competition

- Conducted among athletes with disabilities as part of existing interscholastic competitions, at the end of the meet, individuals and school scores are tabulated for varsity/junior varsity and Special Olympics teams.
- Held prior to varsity/junior varsity competitions, football (soccer), softball or basketball games may be played prior to and at the same site as the varsity/junior varsity game.
- Competitions are organized simultaneously for Special Olympics partnership teams as part of a varsity/junior varsity tournament.

CAMP SHRIVER

Introduction

The unique experience of Camp Shriver brings together an equal number of children with and without disabilities who engage in the same camp activities alongside one another. In doing so, the camp creates opportunities to promote the social inclusion of children with disabilities and to allow children without disabilities the opportunity to interact with and achieve a greater understanding and appreciation of their peers with disabilities. Unlike the school setting, where the differences between children with and without disabilities are often accentuated, the Camp Shriver model stresses the importance of recognizing the similarities that exist among all children who participate. Camp Shriver uses sports as a venue for improving not only campers' sports skills, but also their self-esteem, social skills, and confidence in building friendships with peers.

The specific goals are:

- To provide sports, recreational, and enrichment activities for all campers.
- To improve campers' sports skills as well as their social skills and self-esteem.
- To create an atmosphere of understanding and caring so that campers with and without disabilities can develop friendships.

History

Eunice Kennedy Shriver, founder of Special Olympics and the youngest sister of President John F. Kennedy, opened her home in Rockville, Maryland, to a camp for 35 individuals with ID in the summer of 1962. Camp Shriver, as it became known, grew into an annual event through the 1960s and served as the forerunner for the Special Olympics movement, which has since grown to reach more than two million athletes worldwide. During the summer of 2006, in celebration of Shriver's 85th birthday, the Camp Shriver concept was rekindled and nationally implemented in five sites across the United States.

In Wisconsin

In 2008-2009, the La Crosse Parks and Recreation Department piloted a Camp Shriver in Wisconsin through a three-day winter camp and a five-day summer camp. They have continued their success year after year and have created a model that others can now utilize to offer Camp Shriver in their communities. Greendale Park and Recreation are now host to our second camp in the state. SOWI's goal is to have at least one Camp Shriver added each year until all Regions offer the opportunity. For more information, please contact your Director of Field Services or the Director of Youth Initiatives or visit www.specialolympicswisconsin.org/family_camp_shriver.html.

MOTOR ACTIVITIES TRAINING PROGRAM

The Motor Activities Training Program (MATP) provides comprehensive motor activity and recreation training for persons with the greatest physical need who do not yet possess the physical and/or behavioral skills necessary to participate in official Special Olympics sports. With emphasis on training and participation rather than competition, MATP is part of the commitment by Special Olympics to offer sports training opportunities to individuals with cognitive disabilities of all ability levels.

After five years of consultation with educators, physical therapists and recreation specialists, and after field-testing in the United States and several other countries, MATP was launched in 1989. A comprehensive MATP Guide has been developed to assist trainers.

How It Works

MATP trains participants in motor-based recreation activities and enables them to take part in a program which is appropriate to the age and ability of each individual. After a training period of at least eight weeks, participants may take part in a Special Olympics Training Day, giving each participant a chance to demonstrate his or her “personal best” in an activity and to be recognized for this accomplishment. The skills learned through MATP also enable people with severe disabilities to participate in community recreational activities with their non-disabled peers.

While the goal of MATP is not necessarily to prepare persons with severe disabilities to participate in sports, many MATP participants will gain the skills required to compete in certain Special Olympics sports.

MATP trains participants in seven basic motor skills designed to relate to specific sports. The skills also complement training by educators and therapists in daily living skills. MATP trains participants in:

- Mobility-Gymnastics
- Dexterity-Athletics
- Striking-Softball
- Kicking-Football
- Manual Wheelchair-Athletics
- Electric Wheelchair-Athletics
- Aquatics

MATP can be implemented through schools, group homes, residential facilities and other community-based settings. Training for volunteers is available through Special Olympics Motor Activities Training Schools.

FANS CLUBS

Fans Clubs for Project UNIFY are unique school-wide clubs that are designed around empowering youth with and without cognitive disabilities to promote social justice through a variety of projects and activities. The club offers Unified Sports training and competition, social, leadership, and recreational opportunities adding to students character development and acceptance of students with disabilities.

A Fans Club should be a sanctioned school club. The meeting schedule and format should follow school club policies and procedures. Fans Clubs should have a School Coordinating Team who network with administration, and the athletic, physical education, and special education departments.

Fans Clubs are encouraged to:

- Spread the Word to End the Word
- Participate in Unified Sports
- Attend local sporting events together
- Attend or put on a Youth Activation Summit
- Arrange for a local coach to speak to the club or conduct drills
- Be “Fans in the Stands” at a local SOWI event
- Make banners to support their favorite teams
- Attend an ALPS workshop
- Sponsor a dance or movie night for the school
- Have a pizza party or other social gathering

Further Definitions

School Coordinating Team: Comprised of one special education teacher, one general education teacher, one athlete, and one youth without a cognitive disability.

Youth Activation Summit: a gathering of youth leaders with and without disabilities coming together to learn about youth leadership and social justice through Special Olympics sports and activities.

Fans in the Stands: a program designed to encourage students to get a group of friends together and make posters, banners or organize a pep rally for the Special Olympics athletes at their school. It also encourages those students to attend a Special Olympics event to cheer on their classmates.

Spread the Word to End the Word: a campaign designed to raise the consciousness of society about the dehumanizing and hurtful effects of the “R-Word” (retard) and urges people to resolve to stop using it as an insult, casual or intended comment.

Get Into It, a K-12 service-learning curriculum developed by Special Olympics, is available at no cost to schools and teachers worldwide, and is fit for students with and without disabilities. *Get Into It* teaches young people about cognitive disabilities while empowering them to “be the difference,” by learning values of inclusion, tolerance and respect. The overall goal of *Get Into It* is to increase participation of youth without cognitive disabilities by establishing school-based Special Olympics Programs and activities.

There are several components to *Get Into It*. Made up of four lesson plans compatible with curriculum standards, *Get Into It* teaches youth in the Regionals of language, arts, social studies, history, health and physical education. The lessons range from students engaging in a discussion about stereotypes to students learning about inspirational Special Olympics athletes.

In addition to increasing the participation of youth in Special Olympics, the *Get Into It* curriculum addresses current trends in school reform, such as the standards movement, character education, positive youth development and service-learning.

Get Into It has been endorsed by several leading educational organizations, among them the National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC), Education Commission of the States (ECS) and Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). Development of *Get Into It* has begun in the following Special Olympics regions around the world: North America, Asia/Pacific, East Asia/Chinese Program, Europe/Eurasia, Latin America and Middle East North Africa.

Schools, teachers and parents can download the *Get Into It* curriculum free of charge from pecialOlympicsWisconsin.org. Once on the site, go to the “Get Into It” button which links you to the “Schools and Youth” page where you can scroll down to the “Special Olympics Get Into It” option.

Hard copies of the curriculum are available by contacting the Director of Youth Initiatives at the Regional 8 office (800) 924 - 5202

FAMILIES

A Ray of Hope, A Bright Future Ahead

When parents learn that their newborn or expected child has a cognitive disability, they are often faced with a crisis of conscience. In an instant, the joy and anticipation that these parents were experiencing turns into anxious questioning: What does the future hold for my child? What can we do? How can we cope?

Then they tell us how Special Olympics delivered a ray of hope.

Through year-round sports training and competition, Special Olympics builds self-esteem, fosters courage and teaches valuable lessons about striving, winning, losing and trying again. A recent Yale University study found that athletes participating in Special Olympics benefit from:

- Improved physical fitness and sports skills
- Enhanced self-confidence and social competency
- Greater readiness for employment
- Better preparation for independent living
- Increased ability to make personal decisions
- Improved friendships and family relations

Through Special Olympics Wisconsin, nearly 10,000 athletes and their families are discovering that a bright future lies ahead.

Families can find a network of people with similar concerns, questions and life experiences. They can help find medical expertise and community resources and they find a place of acceptance, respect and belonging.

What Can You Do To Help?

Families and friends of Special Olympics athletes are encouraged to play an active role in their community Special Olympics program, to share in the training of the athletes, and to assist in the public education efforts needed to create greater understanding of the emotional, physical, social and spiritual needs of people with cognitive disabilities and their families. You can be a:

- Cheerleader
- Driver
- Home Trainer
- Fund Raiser
- Spokesperson
- Family Committee Member

One or all—it is your choice! A brochure and Family Handbook in English and Spanish can be found on the Family and Friends page of the SOWI website. These are great resources for new families as they help answer many general questions about Special Olympics.

For more information, contact your Director of Field Services.

SAMPLE ATHLETE OUTREACH LETTER

Date

Dear Athlete (*personalized when possible*):

Congratulation on catching the spirit of (*name of your Agency here*)!

Would you like to join the (*number of athletes in your Agency*) athletes who are already receiving athletic training, improving physical fitness, achieving a sense of community, building friendships and competing in local, and State competition?

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 cognitive disabilities. Our program offers training in (*name of sports your Agency offers*).

Currently, we are training in (*name of sport(s) currently training in*). We practice (#) a week from (*training time*) at (*training site*). There is no charge for training.

A good first step is to come and watch a practice or competition to determine if you'd like to join our team. Please call me at (*your Agency phone #*) so I can give you the details and answer any of your questions.

Cordially,

Name
Position in the Agency
Address
Phone

/encl

Special Olympics Wisconsin Fact Sheet
Eligibility Statement
Who is the Special Olympics Athlete? Handout
(*Any local fact sheet or training schedule you have developed*)

SAMPLE FAMILY OUTREACH LETTER FOR A NEW FAMILY

Date

Dear Family Member (*personalized if possible*):

From skiing to swimming or basketball to track and field, Special Olympics is an opportunity for families to share in the accomplishments of their children... be part of a year-round sports training and competition program that the whole family can enjoy... and share their joy with other families.

The mission of Special Olympics is to provide sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with cognitive 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.

More than nine out of 10 participating families say that Special Olympics has added a new dimension of happiness for their family, improved their child's self image, and served as a strong network for the family.

Families can choose their level of involvement in our Special Olympics program. Some families provide not only encouragement and love, but may also coach, offer transportation, assist with fundraising, officiate, chaperone and train other volunteers.

Our program offers training in (*name of sports your Agency offers*). Currently, we are training in (*name of sport(s) currently training in*). We practice (#) a week from (*training time*) at (*training site*). There is no cost for training.

If you are interested in learning more about how you can involve a family member in Special Olympics, you are welcome to attend a practice and see firsthand the benefits of our program or you may call me at (*your Agency phone #*) so I may answer your questions directly.

Cordially,

Name
Position with Agency
Address
Phone

/encl

Special Olympics Wisconsin Fact Sheet
Statement of Eligibility
Who is the Special Olympics Athlete? Handout
(*Any local fact sheet or practice schedule you may have developed*)

SAMPLE ATHLETE/FAMILY FOLLOW-UP LETTER

Date

Hello (*athlete or family member name*):

We are very excited that you are interested in joining (*Agency Name*).

The first part is to complete the Official Special Olympics Release Form AND Application for Participation. Both forms serve as an athlete's registration and must be completed before an athlete can participate in any practices or competitions. It provides for a photo release, necessary medical information, secondary insurance coverage by Special Olympics, Inc., and emergency medical treatment in the event a parent or guardian cannot be reached.

Please complete the enclosed forms carefully making sure that all the sections are complete, accurate and clear. Mail/deliver it to me by (*date you choose which gives you time to check it and still meet the Medical Deadline date*).

Get ready! Here is the practice schedule so you can mark it on your calendar.

In addition, I look forward to seeing you at the family orientation meeting on (*date*) at (*time*) at (*location*).

Cordially,

Name
Position in the Agency
Address
Phone Number

/encl

Official Special Olympics Release Form
Application for Participation in Special Olympics
Special Exam Form (*if necessary*)
Training Schedule
Family Handbook

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