Greetings,

Respectful and inclusive language is essential to the movement for the dignity and humanity of people with intellectual disabilities. Therefore Special Olympics continues to raise awareness about the harmful and hurtful effects of the R-word “retard or retarded” through the help of people like you! We invite you to be a part of this movement this year by hosting a 2015 Spread the Word to End the Word® campaign!

This packet includes general information about the Spread the Word to End the Word campaign, a to-do list to help you get started, event ideas, examples of past campaigns, a list of talking points, and a commitment form to be filled out and returned. While many of the events are centered in March, your campaign can help spread the word through your community and schools year-round.

For schools, the Spread the Word to End the Word campaign is a great way for students with and without disabilities to make a difference in their schools and communities while learning about each others unique abilities. It is also part of a larger program called Project UNIFY®, which aims to build schools of inclusion and respect through Youth Leadership, Unified Sports and Recreation, and School-wide Engagement. If you would like to learn more about Project UNIFY, please visit www.SpecialOlympicsWisconsin.org/ProjectUNIFY.

For businesses, the Spread the Word to End the Word campaign is a great way to show your support of people of intellectual disabilities, encourage a positive work environment for all, and create a more inclusive community!

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or to discuss any ideas you have.

Thank you for helping us spread RESPECT!

Kind regards,

Krysten Kirsch
Director of Youth Initiatives

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Background

Over the years, the R-word has become a common taunt used to make fun of others. Often unwittingly, the word is used to denote behavior that is clumsy, hapless, and even hopeless. But whether intentional or not, the word conjures up a painful stereotype of people with intellectual disabilities.

Realizing respectful and inclusive language is essential to the movement for the dignity and humanity of people with intellectual disabilities, the effort is spearheaded by college students, Soeren Palumbo (Notre Dame, 2011) and Tim Shriver (Yale, 2011), and led by young people, Special Olympics athletes, and Best Buddies participants across the country.

Action

While most of the activities are centered annually in March, people everywhere can help spread the word throughout their communities and schools all year-round. We’re asking every person, young and old, to help eliminate the demeaning use of the R-word. You can help us change the conversation and create a more accepting world for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and all those people that may appear different, but who have unique gifts and talents to share with the world.

Take the pledge at www.r-word.org and help youth around the world encourage others to think before they speak.
To-Do List

How to get started on your campaign

1. Find a group of friends, classmates, teammates, or club members who want to start the campaign with you.
2. Ask a teacher, administrator, or staff member to be an advisor for your project.
3. Brainstorm ideas for what you want your campaign to look like.
4. Fill out your commitment form and send it in.
5. Receive your campaign kit* and get started!

*Your campaign kit will include the following: wristbands, mechanical pencils, window clings, T-shirts, a T-shirt order form and additional information on how to get involved with Special Olympics in your community.

Wisconsin Campaigns

There are many different ways to conduct a Spread the Word to End the Word campaign. It can be as simple or as elaborate as you would like it to be. Here are just a few examples of some campaigns that have taken place in Wisconsin:

- Hold an informational table or booth (at lunch, school sporting event, in a classroom, etc.)
- Wear Spread the Word to End the Word shirts for a day; it’s a good conversation starter
- Have a pledge drive (during lunch, sporting event, in a classroom, etc.)
- Invite a local Special Olympics athlete or Best Buddies Ambassador to come and speak at an assembly
- Create a video and show it on your school’s television channel, or in a classroom
- Host a sporting event with your schools’ students competing against a Special Olympics team
- Paint a Respect mural on a school wall
- Make an interactive game like “Strike out the R-word” with bowling pins
Event Ideas

Spread the Word to End the Word® relies on grass-roots activities to garner the majority of the campaign’s impact. Here are ideas on how you can participate locally in the campaign.

- Hold a local pledge event at school or in your community. Set up a laptop to encourage people to sign the www.r-word.org pledge page on the spot and/or create a banner for people to sign on the spot.
- Invite local Special Olympics athlete Global Messengers to speak at an assembly, we can help coordinate one if you need assistance.
- Work with local sports teams or school teams to participate in a halftime event to promote Spread the Word to End the Word.
- Spread the word:
  - Hang posters
  - Send e-mails
  - Text / call your family and friends
  - Create your own Spread the Word to End the Word youth rally
  - Use your social networks on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Linked In
  - Join Spread the Word to End the Word social networking pages (i.e, Facebook, Twitter)
  - Send an e-vite to friends to take the pledge and spread the word
- Use the new R-word counter to see how many times your favorite website uses the R-word and then send the link to your friends – http://www.rwordcounter.org
- Print and distribute leaflets throughout your community.
- Notify the press. Call local radio shows and write letters to the editor of your local newspaper.
- Post a comment to an online social message board sharing your thoughts about the R-word and its abuse in our society.
- Post your event’s time and location in the community events section of your hometown newspaper or in your school newspaper or website.
- Set up a booth at events or conferences.
- Contact your local Special Olympics or Best Buddies office to learn how to get involved in Spread the Word to End the Word events in your community.
  - Special Olympics Wisconsin website: www.specialolympicswisconsin.org
  - Best Buddies Wisconsin website: www.bestbuddieswisconsin.org
- Get teams together to participate in the Polar Plunge®. See which team can raise the most Support and compete in the Polar Plunge Video Contest!
- Host a Unified Sports® scrimmage with your high school sports team and your local Special Olympics team.
- Take it to the next level with Project UNIFY®

Need more ideas? Go to www.r-word.org and click on resources to find letter templates, fact sheets, and more.
Key Messages and Talking Points

It is time we Spread the Word to End the Word and build awareness for society to stop and think about its’ use of the R-word. The R-word is something hurtful and painful – “retard” or “retarded.” Most people don’t think of this word as hate speech, but that’s exactly what it feels like to millions of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families and friends. This word is just as cruel and offensive as any other slur. Visit www.r-word.org to make your pledge today.

- Young people around the world are taking a stand and raising awareness of the dehumanizing and hurtful effects of the words “retard” or “retarded” and are helping encourage others to think before they speak.
- Up to three percent of the world’s population have intellectual disabilities - that’s 200 million people around the world. It’s the largest disability population in the world, perhaps you know someone?
- We ask that you help us change the conversation and help eliminate the demeaning use of the R-word from today’s popular youth vernacular and replace it with “respect.” We are asking for your help in creating a more accepting world for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and all those people that may appear different, but have unique gifts and talents to share with the world.
- We’re asking every person – young and old – to help eliminate the demeaning use of the R-word—a common taunt used to make fun of others. Often unwittingly, the word is used to denote behavior that is clumsy, hapless, and even hopeless. But whether intentional or not, the word conjures up a painful stereotype of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It hurts. Even if you don’t mean it that way.
- People with intellectual and developmental disabilities are capable and enjoy sharing life experiences – listening to music, playing video games, watching the latest movies, and yes, having fun – as well as working together toward athletic excellence and mutually enriching one-to-one friendships as demonstrated constantly through Special Olympics and Best Buddies International. They can attend school, work, drive cars, get married, and participate in decisions that affect them, and contribute to society in many ways.
- Special Olympics’ Multi-National Public Opinion Study of Attitudes toward People with Intellectual Disabilities, conducted by Gallup, reveals that throughout the world, over 60 percent of people still believe that people with intellectual disabilities should be segregated in schools and in the workplace. This is intolerable. We need massive attitude change now to attack and reverse the stigma that is destructive to the lives of people with intellectual disabilities and a barrier to growth.
- Did you know that by casually using the word “retard(ed)” to refer to an action as less than ideal you are making someone with an intellectual disability feel less than human - whether you mean to or not? Demeaning any of our fellow human beings by using inappropriate words toward any population negatively impacts all of us.
2015 Campaign Kit Items

- Green Tie-Dye T-shirt with Disable the Label design
- Graphite Heather T-shirt with Traditional Design
- Wristbands
- Window Cling
- Mechanical Pencils

Spread the Word to End the Word®

Special Olympics Wisconsin
Commitment Form

This form must be completed and returned before any campaign kit items will be sent.

School/Business Name: __________________________________________________________

School/Business Mailing Address: ______________________________________________

Lead Adult Name: ______________________________________________________________

Lead Adult Contact Number: ______________________ E-mail: ______________________

Club/Group Affiliation: ________________________________________________________

Lead Student Name: ____________________________________________________________

When do you plan to kick-off your campaign? (approx. date): ______________________

Please describe the plan for your campaign: ______________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

If you are planning on an assembly, do you need assistance scheduling a speaker? YES NO

Sizes of 2 included shirts (adult S-XL):_________ Please check your t-shirt design preference:
Wristbands needed? (Max. 50) _______ □ Tie-Dye Green w/ Disable the Label Design
Mechanical Pencils needed? (Max. 50) _______ □ Graphite Heather w/ Traditional Design
Window Clings needed? (Max. 20) _______

I pledge and support the elimination of the derogatory use of the r-word from everyday speech and promote the acceptance and inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities. I will use the items provided by SOWI solely for this campaign by freely passing along the items to those who also pledge to end the R-word.

Campaign Lead’s signature: _____________________________________________________

Please send completed form to:
Special Olympics Wisconsin
Attn: Krysten Kirsch
10224 N. Port Washington Rd.
Mequon, WI 53092
kkirsch@specialolympicswisconsin.org or projectunify@specialolympicswisconsin.org