



**Special  
Olympics**  
Georgia



**BE A FAN.**

*Bring out the champion in everyone.*



[www.specialolympicsga.org](http://www.specialolympicsga.org)



*Let Me Win. But  
If I Cannot Win,  
Let Me Be Brave  
In The Attempt.*

Special Olympics Athlete Oath

Photos provided by: J. David Cristina, Karl Girardi, Mike Powell, Kory Pryor and Dutch Walters.

## MISSION

*Special Olympics is about triumph in its purest form – not the triumph of one person over another, but rather triumph of the human spirit over the highest obstacles and longest odds.*

Special Olympics Georgia provides 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 the sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

Our goal is to help bring people with intellectual disabilities into the larger society under conditions whereby they are accepted, respected, and given the chance to become useful and productive citizens. When we achieve this goal through our sports program, we demonstrate that Special Olympics has a unique value: to show the world that every person counts and that every person can be something good when we work together.

Special Olympics Georgia invests in people with intellectual disabilities, helping them to develop athletic skills, while also promoting the abilities of the athletes off the field.

When our athletes succeed, attitudes change, communities develop, health and self-esteem are built, and the eyes of the world are focused on all that is good and hopeful and positive.



## HISTORY – INSPIRING CHAMPIONS SINCE 1970

Special Olympics is the first – and still the only – organization to offer sports training and competition for people with intellectual disabilities. In 1970, Special Olympics Georgia was founded in conjunction with the Special Olympics movement that was begun by Eunice Kennedy Shriver in 1968.

That first year, 500 athletes gathered at a suburban Atlanta college to participate in the first-ever track and field event held under the Special Olympics Georgia banner. Over the years, the organization has grown to more than 27,115 athletes participating in 26 sports and more than 500 annual competitions.

*"I want to see Special Olympics continue to grow. It helps athletes like me to feel proud of ourselves and gives us a hope to succeed in life. Through our sports, we learn life skills and grow confidence."*

**Katy Wilson**  
Athlete





## **BENEFITS OF SPECIAL OLYMPICS GEORGIA – FROM INVISIBLE TO EMPOWERED**

- Special Olympics Georgia contributes to the **physical, social, and psychological development** of people with intellectual disabilities.
- Through successful experiences in sports, athletes **gain confidence and build a positive self-image**, which carries over into the classroom, the home, the job, and the community.
- Special Olympics Georgia provides a **safe arena for peer interaction**.
- Participation in Special Olympics **promotes healthy, active lives** among a segment of individuals who are **more likely to face obesity** and related health problems than the general population.
- Special Olympics Georgia provides an opportunity for **healthcare and health education** through a series of screenings offered in conjunction with our State Games.
- A study conducted by the University of Massachusetts Boston and the University of Utah found that **52% of Special Olympics athletes are employed**, while only 10% of the general population of adults with intellectual disabilities are employed.
- Involvement with Special Olympics Georgia **strengthens families**, causing a richer appreciation of talents, and promoting greater support between the Special Olympics athletes, siblings, and parents.
- The **community at large** – through observation and participation – is **united** in understanding people with intellectual disabilities in an environment of equality, respect, and acceptance.

## COMPETITIONS AND TRAINING – FOCUSING ON ABILITIES

Thousands of children and adults with intellectual disabilities see a dream come true when they train, compete and succeed in more than 606 sports competitions held annually at the local, area, state, and regional levels. Special Olympics is unique by accommodating competitors at all ability levels in order to give everyone a reasonable opportunity to win.

Every two years, the Special Olympics World Games are held, alternating Winter and Summer Games. These are patterned after the traditional Olympic Games and follow many of the same customs, rules and regulations. USA Games are typically held the year prior to Special Olympics World Summer Games.

Athletes are required to engage in an eight-week training program prior to any Special Olympics competition to develop skills and learn rules and strategies from their coaches. Coaches and officials are trained and certified to ensure that all athletes receive the highest quality training and competition. Participation in sports training and competitions provides athletes with opportunities to focus on a goal, learn new sports and daily living skills, develop healthy habits, increase their independence, and interact with their peers.

Special Olympics Georgia offers year-round training and competition in 26 sports:



Alpine Skiing	Floor Hockey	Powerlifting
Athletics	Golf	Roller Skating
Badminton	Gymnastics – Artistic	Sailing
Basketball	Gymnastics – Rhythmic	Snowboarding
Bocce	Ice Skating – Figure	Soccer
Bowling	Ice Skating – Speed	Softball
Cycling	Kayaking	Swimming
Equestrian		Table Tennis
Flag Football		Tennis
		Volleyball

*"Our lives would be very sad, dark and stressful without the bright lights of Special Olympics. Dreams really do come true!"*

Ed & Linda Weaver  
Parents

## State Competitions

State Indoor Winter Games – Artistic Gymnastics, Basketball, Bowling, Floor Hockey, and Powerlifting.

State Summer Games – Athletics, Flag Football, Rhythmic Gymnastics, Soccer, Swimming, Table Tennis, Tennis, and Volleyball.

State Fall Games – Bocce, Cycling, Golf, and Softball.

State Horse Show – Dressage, Horsemanship/Equitation, Showmanship, Unified Drill Team, and Western Riding.

State Master's Bowling – Traditional and Unified Bowling for athletes age 22 and older.

## Southeastern Regional Events

Alpine Skiing, Figure Ice Skating, Powerlifting, Sailing, Snowboarding, Speed Ice Skating, and Tennis.

For more information on competitions, training, and coaching, visit [www.specialolympicsga.org/become-an-athlete](http://www.specialolympicsga.org/become-an-athlete) or call 770-414-9390.



*"Special Olympics is a place where I can just be myself and I can feel comfortable."*

**Kelly Kettles**  
Athlete





*"It's so funny now . . . Our kids correct each other for saying the R-Word and stereotyping others in the halls every day since we have started the curriculum."*

Ashley Johnson  
Teacher

## BEYOND SPORTS TRAINING – SPECIAL OLYMPICS GEORGIA CHANGES LIVES

**Healthy Athletes Program:** Volunteer healthcare professionals provide free healthcare screenings, preventative healthcare services, education, equipment, and community referrals through six initiatives during our State Competitions: hearing, dentistry, optometry, podiatry, health promotion, and fitness. Data is gathered at all screenings and is used for planning, programs and improving healthcare policies.

**Unify Georgia:** Unify Georgia has a simple message – respect for all. Unify Georgia is an education-based program that uses the sports and education initiatives of Special Olympics to activate youth in an effort to develop school communities where all young people are agents of change – fostering respect, dignity, and advocacy for people with intellectual disabilities.

**Unified Sports:** Unified Sports combines approximately equal numbers of Special Olympics athletes and athletes without intellectual disabilities on the same teams for training and competition. Unified Sports helps to shatter the stereotypes and diminish the stigma associated with people with intellectual disabilities.

**R-Word Campaign:** The Respect Campaign raises the consciousness of society about the dehumanizing, hurtful, and exclusive effects of the word “retard(ed)”. The Campaign encourages schools and communities to rally and pledge their support to stop using the R-word, and it teaches that language can frame how we think about others.

**Get Into It:** Get Into It is a grade-appropriate curriculum that provides teachers the tools to teach students with and without disabilities about disability awareness and acceptance. Students are introduced to Special Olympics athletes and offered guidance in creating service-learning activities for school and community participation with Special Olympics.




**Athlete Leadership Programs:** Special Olympics Georgia provides athletes with education and training to develop skills for public speaking, coaching, and employment. Athletes then become involved in Special Olympics Georgia and their community by serving on the Board of Directors and Honorary Board, helping to coach their fellow athletes, and speaking to audiences about the impact Special Olympics Georgia has on their lives.

**Y-LEAD (Youth Leaders Educating others About Disabilities):** Special Olympics Georgia provides our youth volunteers ages 13-19 opportunities to learn about and develop leadership skills. The Y-Leads use these skills in their schools and communities to promote inclusion and bridge the gap between students with and without intellectual disabilities.

**Young Athletes:** Young Athletes is a sports play program for children ages 2-7. The aim is to engage children with and without disabilities in appropriate play activities designed to foster physical, cognitive, and social development. The program can be implemented in pre-schools, day care centers, play groups, or at home.

For more information on these programs, visit  
[www.specialolympicsga.org/become-an-athlete](http://www.specialolympicsga.org/become-an-athlete)  
or call 770-414-9390.



*"Special Olympics teaches all of us the value of perseverance and in not letting life's obstacles prevent us from reaching our goals. Aetna is proud to support this effort and to help promote that spirit of possibility."*

**John Price**  
President  
Aetna Georgia Market

## WAYS TO SUPPORT - YOU BRING ABOUT CHANGE

Special Olympics Georgia is supported by funds raised from individuals, corporations, foundations, and civic groups, as well as revenue generated from special events, special projects and cause-related marketing programs. As a 501 (c)(3) private, non-profit organization, contributions to Special Olympics Georgia are tax deductible as allowed by law.

Special Olympics Georgia does not charge athletes to participate, is not a United Way agency, and does not receive any funding from Special Olympics or state government. All monies raised by Special Olympics Georgia remain in Georgia and directly support our athletes.

The Law Enforcement Torch Run (LETR) is Special Olympics Georgia's largest statewide fundraiser. Not only do law enforcement agents from across Georgia raise funds and awareness, but they also guard the "Flame of Hope" on its way to the Opening Ceremony of each State Game.

Special Olympics changes lives and people's perceptions about intellectual disabilities. You, too, can share in the joy of Special Olympics Georgia by supporting the athletes in the following ways:

- Make a Financial Donation
- Become a Monthly Donor
- Sponsor a State Game or Special Event
- Support or participate in a Special Event or Promotion
- Partner with Special Olympics Georgia on a Cause-Related Marketing Campaign
- Provide for Special Olympics Georgia in your Estate Planning
- Organize a Fundraiser Benefiting Special Olympics Georgia
- Donate Through Your Work Place Giving Program
- Ask Your Employer to Match Your Donation
- Become a Coach, Unified Sports Partner, or Volunteer
- Be a Fan in the Stands and Cheer on the Athletes at a State Game
- Like us on Facebook or follow us on Instagram, LinkedIn, Snapchat or Twitter



## **SPONSORSHIP – YOU MAKE AN IMPACT**

There are many opportunities for companies and organizations to partner with Special Olympics Georgia and help our inspiring athletes achieve their goals. Sponsorship of a State Game or Special Event helps cover expenses associated with sports training and competitions, outreach, and advocacy.

As a sponsor, your company will receive significant opportunities for brand awareness, employee engagement, and community goodwill. By partnering with Special Olympics, your company will be associated with a world-wide brand that is well established, recognized, respected and trusted.

Your partnership with Special Olympics Georgia will enable us to continue to reach out into your community and provide our services to those in need.

For more information on how you can make an impact, visit  
[www.specialolympicsga.org/support](http://www.specialolympicsga.org/support)  
or call 770-414-9390.

## **VOLUNTEER - YOU POWER THE MISSION**

Special Olympics Georgia is truly a grassroots effort. With only a small staff of full-time employees and interns, it takes a large and dedicated volunteer force to fulfill our mission and to make our program a reality. Whether a volunteer can commit to a single afternoon's event or to years of coaching a team, we have a place for you.

Volunteer Opportunities for Individuals or Groups:

- State Game Day of Volunteer
- Special Event Day of Volunteer
- State Game Organizing Committee Member
- Special Event Committee Member
- Local/Area Management Team Member
- Coach
- Office Assistant

While our athletes take home medals and awards, our volunteers leave with a wealth of satisfaction, having seen the expression of joy from our athletes during the competition.

For more information on becoming a volunteer, visit  
[www.specialolympicsga.org/volunteers](http://www.specialolympicsga.org/volunteers)  
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*"You are the stars and the world is watching you. By your presence you send a message to every village, every city, every nation. A message of hope. A message of victory.*

*The right to play on any playing field? You have earned it.*

*The right to study in any school? You have earned it.*

*The right to hold a job? You have earned it.*

*The right to be anyone's neighbor? You have earned it."*

**Eunice Kennedy Shriver**

*Opening Remarks  
1987 Special Olympics World Games*



**BE A FAN.**

*Bring out the champion in everyone.*

**Special Olympics Georgia**

6046 Financial Drive  
Norcross, GA 30071

1601 N. Ashley St., Suite 88  
Valdosta, GA 31602

Phone: 770.414.9390

Fax: 404.393.2929

[www.specialolympicsga.org](http://www.specialolympicsga.org)

