

Special Olympics Kansas

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NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Donna Zimmerman
PHONE: 913.236.9290 ext. 112
E-MAIL: pr@kssso.org



HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES ANNOUNCED SPECIAL OLYMPICS KANSAS RECOGNIZES OUTSTANDING ATHLETES

MISSION, Kan.—At the 47th Annual Special Olympics Kansas (SOKS) Summer Games, John Lair, President & CEO of SOKS, recognized five exceptional athletes as they were inducted into the Special Olympics Kansas Hall of Fame.

Michael Camp, a SOKS athlete for over 15 years and a member of the Wichita Independents team, competes in a variety of sports, such as: basketball, track & field, aquatics, football, soccer, bowling, and volleyball. He consistently trains for Special Olympics during all of the seasons. Throughout the years, Michael's mother has been his biggest supporter. Michael has been a great contributor to fundraising, and his infectious smile encourages his teammates and brightens everyone's day. His positive attitude enables him to achieve his goals and be the best athlete that he can.

Phillip Kunkel has been a Special Olympics Kansas athlete for most of his life. As a member of the Wichita Independents, Phillip competes in almost every sport. He trains year-round and enjoys calling plays for his teammates at their basketball games. Phillip's family has played an integral role in his dedication to Special Olympics. His Dad assists with coaching while his mom and other family members attend all of his competitions. Over the years, Phillip has learned to win and lose gracefully while holding his head high no matter what. Special Olympics is Phillip's life and he is immensely passionate about it.

Casey Leatherwood is a member of the Dodge City Dodgers team. He has participated in Special Olympics for 16 years by competing in bowling, basketball, athletics, swimming, and golf. In 2006, Casey was a recipient of the *Most Inspirational Athlete* award at the 2006 Summer Games. In addition, he has also won a gold medal (2006) and a silver medal (2010) from competing in golf at the USA games. Leatherwood dedicates his time to training for Special Olympics every day. With the help of his family fundraising, organizing, and donating for SOKS, Casey has been successful. Special Olympics has given Casey the courage to accomplish his goals and more self-confidence.

Ashley Spriggs has competed in Special Olympics since 2008. She is a member of the New Hope Bulldogs, and has competed in unified softball, football, and snow shoeing. She is a member of the 2015 National Unified Softball team, a 2 time bronze medalist for the 2016 National Football team, and a silver medalist for the 2017 Winter World Games Austria in snow shoeing. In addition, Ashley has also lost over 117 pounds and was featured on ESPN and in *Shape* magazine. Her commitment to Special Olympics shows through her training 5 times per week during the year. Ashley is known for having a great attitude, motivating her teammates, and being a great source of encouragement.

Steven Riebel, a member of the Allen County Special Olympics team, has participated in Special Olympics for over 15 years. He has competed in bowling and track & field. Steven's determination gave him the courage to convince the local police in his community to include local athletes in the torch run from the Iola County courthouse and the Yates Center's trip through town. His parents have been Special Olympics coaches for over 31 years, and his brother also helped for a period of time. Steven's genuine concern for others, spirit, and openness epitomizes the meaning of a Special Olympics Hall of Famer.

An induction into the Special Olympics Hall of Fame takes more than a gold medal. The Hall of Fame is a way to recognize longevity and achievement of athletes and volunteers within the organization. To be inducted, a nominee must portray exceptional sportsmanship, as well as a positive attitude on and off the field. These very important athletes deserve to be recognized for their personal and athletic accomplishments. Nomination forms are available online at www.kssso.org and may be submitted any time. Awards are given annually at the Summer Games.

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