

The SOKS Mantra

Energized by the pride and power of teamwork, Special Olympics Kansas provides individuals with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to be an athlete... and more... through acceptance, inclusion, physical fitness, health and nutrition programs, and leadership development

Accountability * Attitude * Integrity * Respect * Teamwork * Dedication

MISSION

Special Olympics Kansas (SOKS) is dedicated to empowering individuals with intellectual disabilities to become physically fit, productive and respected members of society through sports competitions, health and nutrition programs, and leadership development. Offering year-round initiatives to children and adults with intellectual disabilities, Special Olympics Kansas is a platform for acceptance and inclusion as well as one of the largest advocates for healthy lifestyles in the state – regardless of race, religion, ethnicity or cultural differences.

HISTORY

Special Olympics was the vision of Eunice Kennedy Shriver. She believed that individuals with intellectual disabilities could participate and excel in a variety of sports. In 1968, at Chicago's Soldier Field, the inaugural competition for intellectually disabled athletes took place with 1,000 athletes participating; six were from Kansas.

Special Olympics Kansas was organized in 1970, with the first games taking place in Parsons. Today, SOKS offers 71 state, area and regional competitions throughout Kansas to 107 Local Programs with 4,977 athletes of all ability levels participating.

LAW ENFORCEMENT TORCH RUN

The Law Enforcement Torch Run™ (LETR) for Special Olympics began in Kansas in 1981 when Wichita Police Chief Richard LaMunyon saw a need to raise funds and create awareness for SOKS. Today the LETR is the movement's largest grass-roots fundraiser and public awareness vehicle.

IMPACT

Participation in Special Olympics Kansas:

- Increases the physical activity levels of adults and children with intellectual disabilities
- Provides a social outlet for participants to interact with their peers and community members
- Increases public awareness for those with intellectual disabilities and encourages inclusion among persons without disabilities
- Provides health screenings and education to athletes improving overall health and well-being
- Develops leadership and public relations skills of athletes through Athlete Leadership Programs
- Encourages better behavior, better habits and better general life skills resulting in higher self-esteem and success in life

OUTREACH

To be successful, Special Olympics Kansas must continually identify and enroll new athletes, and retain athletes in the state program. Headquarters and field office staff and coaches devote much of their time and efforts to promote new local programs and ensure that the Special Olympics experience is available to all individuals with intellectual disabilities in Kansas.

Annually, dedicated Kansans share their time and talents to provide athletes with the best training and competition opportunities possible. From coaching to officiating to sponsoring to planning, there's a position for everyone who wants to become involved.

Athlete Oath

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

PROGRAMS

Sports Training and Competition - The sports and competition program improves the health and social interaction of SOKS athletes by providing them access to regular physical activity through structured practices and competitions supervised by trained personnel.

Health and Wellness – Healthy Athletes® provides free health exams in a fun, welcoming environment that removes anxiety and trepidation that people with intellectual disabilities often experience when faced with a medical visit. The impact on the health and well-being of SOKS athletes can be significant, in some cases changing lives by discovering unknown health issues or providing health screenings, that otherwise would not be available. Screenings are conducted by volunteer medical professionals.

Global Messengers - A 12 hour course, involving strengths assessments, individual projects and working with mentors prepares athletes to receive Global Messenger designation. The course educates and trains them in leadership and public-speaking principles so that they are capable of representing SOKS as speakers, coaches, team captains, or members of the Board of Directors. Companies or Organizations may request an athlete presentation at any time.

Young Athletes™ - This initiative seeks to provide activities to children, 3 - 7, with intellectual disabilities to improve physically, cognitively and socially. The activities of Young Athletes not only facilitate growth in a child, but also offer parents and other children tools to grow, to play together and to become stronger in many ways.

Unified Champion Schools – This initiative introduces students to their peers with Intellectual Disabilities and combats bullying. SOKS works with Kansas schools to create inclusive sports teams. Volunteers and Special Olympics athletes compete together in the Kansas Unified Sports League in year-round competition against other Unified teams.

REGIONS

Special Olympics Kansas is divided into five geographic regions across the state. A regional director guides each region in all Special Olympics activities, including training, competition, fundraising, public relations, outreach and volunteer relations.

Contact Information: 913-236-9290

SPORTS

Alpine Skiing	Floor Hockey
Athletics	Golf
Basketball*	Powerlifting
Bocce*	Snowshoeing
Bowling	Soccer*
Cheerleading	Softball
Cross Country Skiing	Speed Skating
Cycling	Swimming
Figure Skating	Tennis
Flag Football	Volleyball

* Offered in Kansas Unified Sports League

STATE EVENTS

January

John L. Cassidy Heartland Winter Games, Weston, Mo

March

Basketball & Cheerleading Tournament, Hays

May

Powerlifting, Lawrence

June

Summer Games, Wichita

July

Softball & Golf Tournament, Wichita

September

Soccer & Bocce Tournament, Olathe

November

Fall Sports Classic, Shawnee

Special Olympics Kansas is a registered 501(c) (3), nonprofit organization in the state of Kansas. Special Olympics Kansas does not receive state funding, Kennedy Foundation funds and is not a designated United Way Agency.

Special Olympics Kansas

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