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Special Olympics Kansas Delegates to Make Case of Impact and Need for Critical Funding on Capitol Hill

WASHINGTON, D.C. - February 4, 2016 – Special Olympics athletes, leaders, and family members from 39 states will converge on Capitol Hill on February 10 for Special Olympics' 14th annual "Capitol Hill Day." Throughout the day, Special Olympics athletes from across the nation will hold more than 250 face-to-face meetings with their Congressional representatives to advocate for continued federal support for critical health and education services provided by Special Olympics. These services transcend the playing field and transform the lives of athletes and families, bringing inclusion and greater acceptance of all abilities to classrooms across the country and providing essential health care that is otherwise often unavailable due to the lack of trained health care providers and facilities.

Special Olympics self-advocates will educate lawmakers and their staffs about the significant consequences that arise from the stigma and stereotypes that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities face and how that impacts their lives in the areas of sports, health care, education, and employment. The goal is to effectively convey the high-impact and cost-effectiveness of Special Olympics' evidence-based programming that addresses these issues, and to secure continued support from legislators.

Representing Special Olympics Kansas (SOKS) will be athlete Chevi Peters and Coach John Lair from Pittsburg and Donna Zimmerman, Sr. VP of Communications for SOKS. John Lair was named the 2014 SO North America Coach of the Year. His award was based on Health & Wellness programs implemented in Pittsburg for the SO athletes, in addition to regular competition and training. Chevi Peters has been featured on ESPN with a video tracking his training and competition at the World Summer Games in Los Angeles, in 2015. Peters won 3 gold and 1 silver medal at the games, and has given over 30 speeches/interviews since his accomplishment.

In 2015 Special Olympics Kansas provided almost \$115,000 of medical services and/or screenings to athletes. The screenings are Special Smiles, Opening Eyes, Healthy Hearing and Health Promotions. Last year 182 athletes out of 246 screenings received new prescription glasses through the Opening Eyes. In Special Smiles 33 out of 150 were identified as needing urgent dental care.

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“The Special Olympics movement has been a leader in connecting people with intellectual disabilities and encouraging greater understanding and inclusion across the world,” said Mary Davis, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Special Olympics. “The U.S. Government’s partnership with Special Olympics to support Americans with intellectual disabilities has helped to raise awareness and catalyze support from governments around the globe for people with intellectual disabilities.”

Special Olympics Chairman, Timothy P. Shriver, said “the U.S. Government has been a steadfast champion of the Special Olympics movement which fights against inactivity, injustice, and intolerance of people with intellectual disabilities. We have been successful partners in working to create a unified America through inclusive sports, education and health programs. Together we need to continue working towards ensuring Americans with intellectual disabilities have the same rights, respect, access to services, and opportunities as all other Americans.”

Capitol Hill Day will conclude with a private reception at the Library of Congress for participating Special Olympics athletes and their state delegations.

About Special Olympics Program Name

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