

Special Olympics Kansas

www.kssso.org



**Special
Olympics**
Kansas

NEWS RELEASE

DATE: February 20, 2017
CONTACT: Donna Zimmerman
PHONE: 913.236.9290 ext. 112
E-MAIL: pr@kssso.org

John Lair Named New President and Chief Executive Officer of Special Olympics Kansas

Mission, KS - The Board of Directors of Special Olympics Kansas (SOKS) has announced that John Lair, has been named the new President and Chief Executive Officer, effective May 1. Lair will replace Chris Hahn, who is retiring June 30th, after 29 years at the helm of the organization.

Lair has 22 years Special Olympics experience. He is currently Executive Director of New Hope Services in Pittsburg, KS. In his position he supervises a staff of 150 and manages a budget of \$5 million annually. Lair started the New Hope Bulldogs Special Olympics Program in Pittsburg in 2001. He has grown the program to a well-rounded competitive organization recognized on a national and world stage. He has established nutritional programs for New Hope residents, designed and fundraised for the Legacy Fitness Center, and emphasizes quality of life for each athlete. Lair was named the 2014 Special Olympics North America Coach of the Year, has been featured on ESPN, attended 3 World Games as coach and 3 USA Games as coach. He has served on the Board of Directors for SOKS and the Kansas Law Enforcement Torch Run. Additionally, in 2016 he was named the American Health Care Association Intellectual Disability/Development Disability Hero of the Year, and received the Pittsburg State University Outstanding Alumni Award.

Lair became involved in Special Olympics while in college. One of the classes he was taking offered “extra credit” for anyone to volunteer at a Special Olympics spring track meet. That was his first experience and he was hooked. Lair is currently a certified coach in 16 sports

Mark Malick, Chairman of the Board of Directors stated, “John has a long association with Special Olympics and his proven record of success in organizational management, fundraising and leadership makes him an incredible fit for our organization. He is knowledgeable about the history and workings of the Law Enforcement Torch Run and our Health and Wellness Programs. He will serve our program and stakeholders well.”

As President/CEO Lair’s primary responsibilities include strategic leadership, operational management, fundraising and moving forward the Special Olympics Kansas mission and objectives consistent with the policies, practices and procedures set forth by Special Olympics, Inc. and the Special Olympics Kansas Board of Directors. SOKS has 5,136 athletes, 2,294 coaches, and utilizes 1,300 law enforcement officers and 16,575 volunteers annually.

Lair is originally from Pittsburg, KS and a graduate of Pittsburg State University with a degree in Recreational Therapy and Psychology. His wife, MeLinda, is Senior Coordinator for the University of Kansas Medical Center Area Health Education –East Office. She volunteers extensively for Special Olympics Kansas and is a member of the Pittsburg Library Board and the Frontenac High School Education Foundation. She was recently recognized at the annual Women of Distinction Awards for Pittsburg.

The mission of Special Olympics Kansas is to provide 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 and experience joy while participating in the sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, Special Olympics athletes and the community. Currently, SOKS provides 20 sports involving over 5,000 athletes supported by thousands of volunteers.

#