

SOKS FACT SHEET

MISSION

Special Olympics Kansas 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.

STATISTICS

- Approximately 170 million people or 3% of the world's population have intellectual disabilities - which makes it the largest disability population in the world. Approximately 80,000 people in Kansas are diagnosed with an intellectual disability.
- Intellectual disabilities are 7 times more prevalent than deafness, 10 times more prevalent than cerebral palsy, 25 times more prevalent than blindness and 35 times more prevalent than muscular dystrophy
- According to a Yale University study, Special Olympics has a direct and positive effect on the self-image of participating athletes and their ability to function in a social setting. Athletes perform better at school, at work, and at home the longer they participate in the program.

FUNDRAISING

Special Olympics Kansas is a registered 501(c)(3), nonprofit organization in the state of Kansas. Special Olympics Kansas receives no federal, state, United Way or Kennedy Foundation funds. All funds are obtained through public and private donations.

HISTORY

Special Olympics was the vision of Eunice Kennedy Shriver. She witnessed the athletes' joys and strengths, and believed that individuals with intellectual disabilities could indeed participate and excel in a variety of sports. In 1968, her inspiration became what today is called the Special Olympics movement. The first competition took place on July 28, 1968 at Chicago's Soldier Field with 1,000 athletes participating. Six Kansas athletes took part in the inaugural event. The Special Olympics movement swept into Kansas in 1970, with the first games taking place in Parsons. Today it has 110 Local Programs and includes more than 5,300 athletes of all abilities.

VOLUNTEERS

Annually, 23,000 dedicated Kansans share their time 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. Special Olympics Kansas encourages the involvement of new volunteers who can share their talents in a variety of areas.

IMPACT

- Special Olympics athletes get along better in school, in their community and in life.
- Special Olympics athletes derive considerable enjoyment from solving difficult problems.
- Special Olympics athletes reach more and higher goals of self-esteem and success in general.
- Special Olympics athletes have better behavior, better habits and better general life skills.

