



## Special Olympics Indiana to Celebrate 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at 2019 Summer Games in Terre Haute

*Nearly 3,000 athletes and thousands of supporters from across the state will come together in June for three days of competition and revelry honoring the past, present, and future of the Special Olympics movement in Indiana.*



**TERRE HAUTE, Ind.** — Celebrating the *Joy of Inclusion* and 50 years of changing lives through the transformative power of sports, Special Olympics Indiana's [50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Summer Games](#) will be held June 7-9 at Indiana State University and Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology.

Founded in June 1969—just one year after the inaugural Special Olympics International Games in Chicago—and now serving more than 16,000 each year, the statewide nonprofit is a part of the global Special Olympics movement using year-round sport, health, education, and leadership programs every day across world to end discrimination against and empower people with intellectual disabilities.

The Indiana Summer Games are the organization's largest annual event, featuring three days of state finals competition in eight Olympic-type sports: bocce, bowling, cycling, horseshoes, powerlifting, swimming, track & field, and volleyball. A record 2,868 Special Olympics athletes and Unified partners representing 66 delegations from every part of the state will compete this year, with an additional 1,200 coaches, 1,800 volunteers, and thousands of additional family members and supporters expected to make the journey to Terre Haute.

"On June 6, 1969, Indiana State University professors Dr. Tom Songster and Dr. Judy Campbell took a leap of faith on a concept: that people with intellectual disabilities could benefit from sports programming and participation," said Jeff Mohler, president and CEO of Special Olympics Indiana. "Now, 50 years later, Special Olympics Indiana continues to open hearts and minds towards people with intellectual disabilities—focusing on what they can do, rather than what they cannot do."

The theme of the 2019 Indiana Summer Games is *Joy of Inclusion*, a phrase highlighting the true spirit of the Special Olympics movement—past, present, and future. A wide variety of anniversary-related activities, souvenirs, and surprises are planned for the Games, including a specially commissioned *Joy of Inclusion* sculpture; commemorative 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary medals provided to all athletes by the Terre Haute Visitors & Convention Bureau; custom trading pins and trading cards, provided free to athletes and available for purchase; and official 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary uniform shirts for all competitors, produced locally by Pacesetter Sports and largely paid for by the Terre Haute community.

This year's milestone follows the July 2018 observation of Special Olympics International's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, wrapping up a two-year period honoring the legacies of the organization's founders and athlete leaders while celebrating the tremendous progress made in Indiana and across the world in the areas of social inclusion and opportunity for people with intellectual disabilities.

"In this, our 50th Anniversary season, Special Olympics Indiana promises to use sports to build bridges of inclusion and break down barriers of discrimination and injustice," Mohler said. "Celebrate 50 years of inclusion with us, both in your local community and across the great state of Indiana!"

Other highlights of the Games include:

- Opening Ceremonies at the Hulman Center (Friday at 7:30 p.m.), the official start of the Games featuring live entertainment, the Parade of Athletes, a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary program featuring remarks by Mohler and former Special Olympics Indiana leaders Tom Songster, Dennis Schmidt, and Michael Furnish, the lighting of the "Flame of Hope," and more.
- Healthy Athletes® at the ISU College of Health and Human Services, offering free screenings and instruction to all Summer Games participants in six health disciplines, with health care professionals and students overseeing stations focused on vision, dentistry, podiatry, audiology, physical therapy, and better health and well-being.
- Olympic Town, presented by Duke Energy, offering a variety of activities for athletes, coaches, and family members including carnival games, souvenirs, live entertainment, and arts and crafts.
- The Finish Line Fitness Challenge and interactive soccer demonstration (Friday at 1:00 p.m.). A champion sponsor of Special Olympics Indiana, Finish Line will again provide hundreds of volunteers for the Games and donate thousands of pairs of shoes as incentive for participation in the organization's Unified Fitness Club program.
- The third annual "Run Unified Relay" (Friday at 2:30 p.m.), a special fundraising event centering on a 4 X 100-meter run by eight teams each made up of Special Olympics athletes, law enforcement officers, and representatives from Special Olympics Indiana sponsors. This year's event will again be immediately preceded by a community torch run stepping off from Pacesetter Sports (2831 S. 3rd St.) and ending with a ceremonial lap around ISU's Gibson Track.
- The Festival of Champions at Olympic Town (Saturday from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m.), a fun-filled Summer Games party, outdoor dance, and fireworks display bringing competitors together for an evening of entertainment and celebration.

For more information about Special Olympics Indiana's 2019 Summer Games, including the full schedule of events and details about volunteering, visit [www.soindiana.org/summer-games](http://www.soindiana.org/summer-games).

#### **ABOUT SPECIAL OLYMPICS INDIANA**

Special Olympics Indiana is a nonprofit organization that is a part of the global [Special Olympics](http://www.sointernational.org) movement, using sport, health, education, and leadership programs every day around the world to end discrimination against and empower people with intellectual disabilities. Founded in 1969 and celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, Special Olympics Indiana has grown to more than 16,000 athletes and unified partners in virtually every county throughout the state. With the support of nearly 10,000 coaches and volunteers, Special Olympics Indiana provides year-round sports training and athletic competition in more than 20 Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities at no cost to the participants. Learn more by visiting [www.soindiana.org](http://www.soindiana.org).

# # #

#### **CONTACTS:**

Nathan Barnes, Manager of Grants & Communication  
[nbarnes@soindiana.org](mailto:nbarnes@soindiana.org) | 317.328.2008 | 219.742.3755

Kelly Ries, Director of Advancement  
[kries@soindiana.org](mailto:kries@soindiana.org) | 317.328.2013 | 317.414.4618