

Everyday Champions

2023
ANNUAL
REPORT



Special Olympics
Indiana



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Mission

To provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, offering them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

Vision

An inclusive world for all, driven by the power of sport, through which people with intellectual disabilities live active, healthy and fulfilling lives.

Goal

For all persons with intellectual disabilities to have the chance to become useful and productive citizens who are accepted and respected in their communities.

Board of Directors

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- Matt Dixon, Vice Chair
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Financials

BY THE NUMBERS

\$0 Fees Charged to Athletes and Families



69 County Programs



8,500 Volunteers



59 Unified Fitness Clubs



19,022 Athletes



49 Athlete Leadership Councils



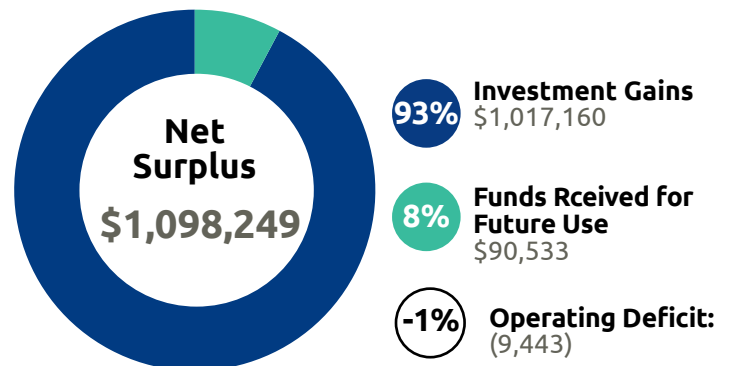
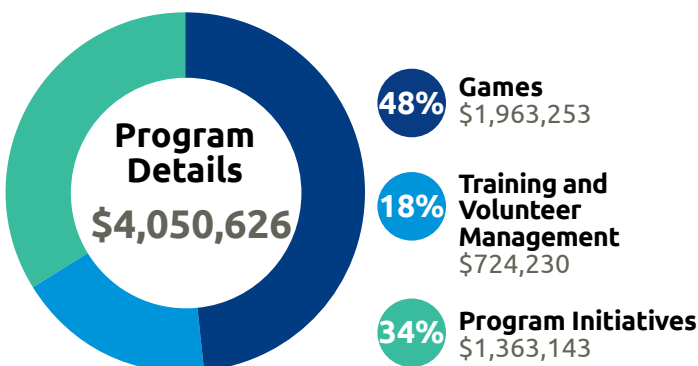
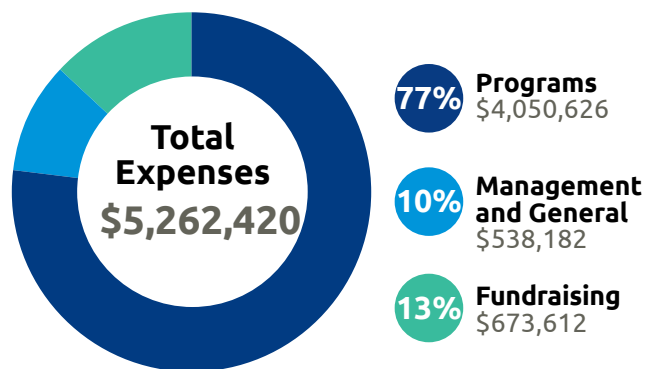
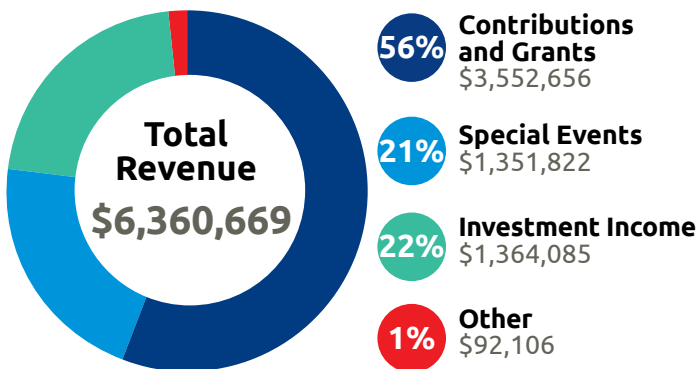
639 Athlete Health Screenings



2,813 Competitions



577 Unified Champion Schools





From the President and CEO

Wow! What a year we had in 2023. We ended with an athlete participation count of 19,022. The largest athlete participation in the history of Special Olympics Indiana. Over 19,000 ... incredible!

What was the key to our success in achieving this milestone? Our people. Our hardworking athletes, volunteers, coaches, families, donors, sponsors, board members, and staff. Not just the people with us today but those who came before us.

As I celebrate the number, I recall a quote from Sir Isaac Newton as he was asked about his scientific innovations. Newton said, "If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." Newton understood that without the great scientific discoveries that came before him, he would have achieved nothing.

The same applies to us. Special Olympics Indiana has many, many significant giants in our past. Unfortunately, we lost a few in the past year. I think of Dr. Tom Songster, our co-founder and the first person to serve as our CEO. Leah Bischoff, our first administrative assistant. I think of Jimmy Erskine, an athlete and son to the greats Carl and Betty Erskine.

I know that many of our local programs lost loved ones too. I write this letter to all of you as I am on my way to a funeral for another local giant.

As we celebrate 19,022, as we remember the giants of our past, if you are not already a giant in someone else's life, become one. Each of our local programs could use another coach or volunteer. If you are already that giant, thank you. Continue making a difference.

Jeff Mohler, President and CEO



In Memoriam

Remembering Jimmy Erskine, Dr. Tom Songster and Leah Bishoff

The Special Olympics Indiana community lost three of its early advocates in 2023 as Jimmy Erskine, Dr. Tom Songster and Leah Bishoff all passed.

Those three individuals served key roles in furthering SOIN's purpose and bringing increased opportunities to Hoosiers with intellectual disabilities.



Jimmy Erskine

Jimmy Erskine, son of Dodgers baseball great Carl Erskine, brought joy and hope to countless members of the Special Olympics Indiana community while becoming the face of its mission.

Born in 1960, doctors told the Erskines that the life expectancy of a child with Down syndrome was 10 years. But with the love and support of Carl, his wife, Betty, and those around them, Jimmy lived a half-century more, went on to become known throughout his Anderson community and eventually work at Applebee's for two decades.

Jimmy took part in Special Olympics and encouraged others to do so as well. A photo of him crossing the finish line at a track and field event, with arms raised and huge smile on his face, became an iconic symbol for the movement.

Jimmy was 63.



Dr. Tom Songster

Tom Songster was a dedicated, committed and leading pioneer for Special Olympics Indiana, which he helped found in 1968.

His legacy includes the early adoption of coaching education, sports management and program development that helped launch opportunities for Hoosier athletes with intellectual disabilities.

A former cross country and track athlete, Tom was a professor of physical education at Indiana State University. With his deep knowledge and passion for sports, he worked to train adults in how to bring recreational sports to people with disabilities.

Serving as the volunteer Indiana Director from 1969-74, Tom became the Special Olympics national Director of Sports and Recreation in 1974, moving to Washington, D.C. He retired as the Senior Vice President at Special Olympics International in 2008, having



helped bring programs to China, Russia, Egypt, India, Turkey, Argentina, Kenya and Ethiopia, among other nations.

Tom was 83.

Leah Bishoff

Leah Bishoff served as the executive assistant for Special Olympics Indiana under Songster

and others, helping to usher in opportunities for Hoosier athletes with intellectual disabilities.



Year In Review

Jan. 3

Special Olympics Indiana and Pacers Sports and Entertainment hosted "The Best We've Got," a Night of Inspiration Featuring "The Carl Erskine Story" at Gainbridge Fieldhouse. Nearly 2,000 attended.



Jan. 8-10

Fifteen counties representing both Indiana and Ohio sent 137 athletes and 32 Unified partners to Lawrenceburg to compete in the Winter Games. The 42nd annual event marked the second year for the interstate partnership.



March 3-4

The 2023 Polar Plunge season concluded at Eagle Creek Park as more than 800 individuals gathered to take a frigid dip. The event included a high school plunge that saw students raise more than \$48,000 in donations, part of a \$160,000 two-day finale.

March 25

The Youth State Basketball Tournament was held at the University of Indianapolis, once again marking the sole Special Olympics basketball tournament dedicated solely to youth players.

April 1-2

The Men's and Women's State Basketball Tournaments featuring nearly 800 athletes and Unified partners from across Indiana competed at the Pacers Athletic Center at Grand Park in Westfield. This marked the end of a season that saw 1,800 players on 231 teams compete in 3-on-3, 5-on-5 and skills competition formats.

May 19

The ninth annual Cop on a Rooftop took place at 22 participating Dunkin' Donuts locations, where officers collected money to support Special Olympics Indiana.

June 9-11

Offering three days of competition, achievement, friendship and fun, Special Olympics Indiana hosted its 54th annual Summer Games on and around the campuses of Indiana State University and Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology. More than 2,100 athletes from across the state competed in seven sports.

June 17-25

The 201-member delegation to the Special Olympics World Games included swimmer Liam Price of Greenwood and volunteer George Srour of Indianapolis. Price won a silver medal as part of a relay team.

July 13

Twenty-seven foursomes took to the links at Brickyard Crossing Golf Club in Indianapolis for the Charity Golf Classic. Green flags kicked off the shotgun start.



Special Olympics Indiana



Aug. 12

The state softball and golf championships kicked off in Greenwood. For softball, 30 teams competed at Center Grove Lassie League fields while across town 224 athletes and Unified partners teed off at Hickory Stick Golf Club.

Sept. 17

The ninth annual Heartland Collegiate Athletic Conference Unified Bowling Tournament was held at Woodland Bowl in Indianapolis. All 10 HCAC teams were represented with Bluffton University winning and Anderson University finishing runners-up.

Sept. 22

The Polo Charity Event in Whitestown raised more than \$20,000 for Special Olympics Indiana. Along with a polo match, events included an Airplane Candy Drop and Stick Horse Race.

Sept. 22-23

The grace and power of equestrian competition took center stage at the Hendricks County 4-H Fairgrounds and Conference Complex in Danville as 34 athletes showcased their talents in both English- and Western-style riding in the State Equestrian Championship.

Sept. 28

The Bocce Bash at Eli Lilly and Company Colonel's Field included 48 teams competing for the top prize as part of Lilly's Corporate Day of Giving.

Oct. 1

More than 400 athletes converged at Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory High School in Indianapolis for the EKS

Day celebration as well as state competitions for distance run/walk and flag football. Meanwhile, at Grand Park, more than 500 athletes competed in the state cornhole and soccer championships.

Oct. 13-14

Designed for program leaders, volunteers, coaches and families, the annual State Conference provided valuable training in sports and program management. Other highlights included Spirit of Special Olympics Awards and the Indiana Athlete Leadership Council meeting.

Nov. 15

More than 1,700 athletes and Unified partners from 51 programs across the state gathered for the two-day State Bowling Championships in Indianapolis. More than 230 lanes were needed to host all of the competitions.

Liam Price



Athlete Spotlight

Standing poolside at the 2023 Special Olympics World Games in Berlin, Germany, everything came rushing back for Liam Price.

Memories of his first practices and the endless laps since. The struggles. The successes. The determination to keep going.

Quite a lot to take in while getting ready for the biggest competition of his life.

It would be natural to feel a little fear in that moment – a “What am I doing here?” thought or two.

Nothing of the sort. With the work he put in, he knew he belonged there. It was the culmination of a journey he took one step, one day at a time for nearly half his life.

“That was such a special moment for me,” the 22-year-old from Greenwood said. “It was something I had wanted to achieve from the beginning. Long before I knew I was capable of it, I had a vision of what I wanted and what I was willing to do to get it.”

Price represented the 19,000 Special Olympics Indiana athletes that week in Germany. He earned a silver medal as part of the 200-meter medley relay, swimming the



backstroke. He also competed in the 100 backstroke and 400 freestyle.

His father, Jon Price, watched from the stands while his mother, Cindy Price, watched from home.

They stand as witnesses to Liam's physical, mental and emotional commitment. It's the same passion millions of parents see in their children every day and the same that Special Olympics helps to build in its athletes.

"When he first started out, just competing in Special Olympics fostered a sense of self-confidence in Liam and motivated him to explore what he could attain," Cindy Price said. "He was overweight. He was lonely. But pretty quickly he recognized that he didn't have to be a spectator in life. That he had a story to tell. Special Olympics lit a fire under him. It opened up his world."

Liam studies communications with an emphasis in public relations at the University of Indianapolis. He enjoys working at the campus radio station and volunteers with the White River Township Fire Department. He became the first Special Olympics athlete to swim on the Greyhounds' varsity team.

In 2021, he spoke at the NCAA Convention, sharing the

importance of inclusion, nutrition and physical fitness for all college athletes.

Standing there on the pool deck in Germany, Liam thought back to all the opportunities Special Olympics provides him. He wasn't alone during that journey. His friends, coaches and fellow athletes were with him every step of the way.

So was his family.

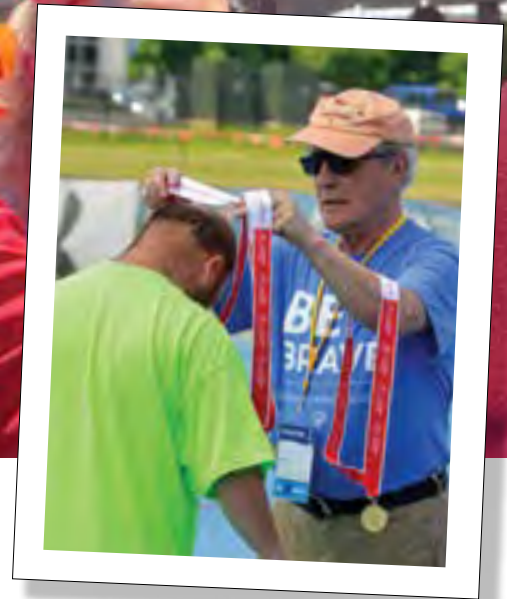
"In Germany, Liam was in the first event, the 400 free," Jon Price said. "It's not his strongest event, and he finished last in his heat. But then people from all around the world stood up and cheered him on to his finish.

"Sitting in Olympic Stadium, it was raining, and I'm lucky it was, because I was crying. There's this kid who grew up with an intellectual disability who found his path, his place in the world. It's inspiring."



Linda Boothe

JOHNSON COUNTY



Volunteer Spotlight

Special Olympics Indiana could not accomplish its mission of delivering opportunities to individuals with intellectual disabilities without thousands of volunteers who help in so many ways.

They are the coaches, Unified partners and county coordinators. They are the timekeepers, award presenters and setup crews.

These men and women serve in roles big and small, donating what time their schedules allow to support Special Olympics Indiana athletes every step of the way.

“Most people want to be involved, to help out,” Johnson County coordinator Linda Boothe said. “You just need to find the right way and the right time to ask them.”



Volunteers come from a multitude of backgrounds. Some are former players looking to remain engaged in the sport. Some draw inspiration from community involvement.

Boothe began volunteering for Special Olympics Indiana the same way many parents across the United States so often do – to support her child.

Whether it's Scouts, band, athletics or another activity that draws young people in, the adults who love them are frequently right beside them offering their help.

"My daughter, Chelsea, started playing basketball in high school," Boothe said. "I took her to her first practice and watched her start participating. As she became more involved, I became more involved. That's how it happens."

Boothe said the quality she looks for most in volunteers is compassion. Whether coaching a team or handing out medals, people who seek to understand what drives other people make an instant connection.

"You have to believe in what you are doing, in helping the athletes and understand what their needs are," Boothe said.

"That's often easier for family members, but some great volunteers are just people who want to do some good."

Every athlete brings a different life experience, Boothe said. Special Olympics isn't a one-size-fits-all approach.

Boothe offers her volunteers training in how to adapt to athletes with different abilities, but it's patience and kindness that serve best.

"Some athletes are high-functioning and very easy to work with," Boothe said. "Others take a little more accommodating. Some will interrupt you, but it's not in a bad way. You learn how to interact with each of them without shutting them down."

Boothe has been supporting Special Olympics Indiana for more than two decades. She sees everyday examples of volunteers who change lives through interactions.

Those small exchanges that deliver joy, encouragement and normalcy to an athlete's day are what bring her back year after year.

"You form bonds with people through volunteering, and it's hard to give that up," Boothe said. "Most parents take for granted what their children will experience in life. When I see our athletes succeed and continue to grow, it sends chills up my spine and warms my heart to know that these things can happen."

OPPORTUNITIES TO VOLUNTEER

Special Olympics Indiana utilizes volunteers throughout the year at a variety of events, without whom we could not offer these opportunities for more than 19,000 athletes with intellectual disabilities in our state.

If you would like to get involved and volunteer, here are some opportunities to do so:

January: Winter Games

February: Polar Plunge

March and April: State Basketball Tournaments

May: Spring Games and Law Enforcement Torch Run

June: Summer Games

July: Charity Golf Classic

August: Plane Pull Challenge

September: State Competitions and EKS Games

October: State Volleyball Competition

November: Area Bowling Tournaments

December: State Bowling Tournaments

Learn more at SOIndiana.org/volunteer

Each year, Special Olympics Indiana recognizes individuals who demonstrate outstanding support. Winners are announced during a ceremony at State Conference.

Volunteer of the Year

Linda Boothe

Family of the Year

The Salla Family

Coach of the Year

Darlene Dietrich

LETR Officer of the Year

Deputy Jim Engmark

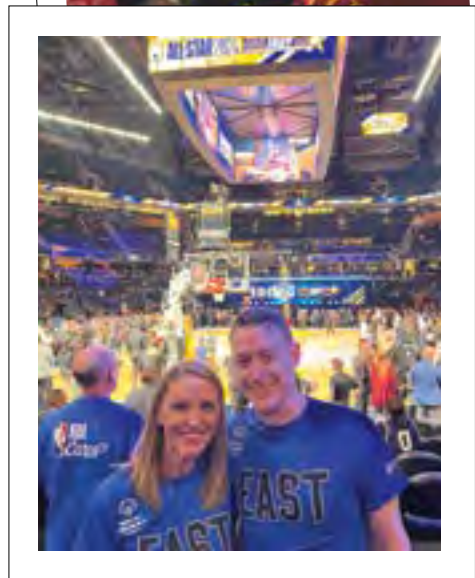
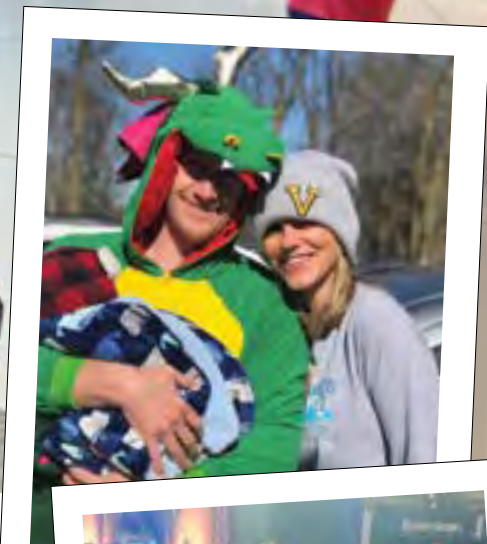
Athlete of the Year

Nicholas Herran

Spirit of Special Olympics Award



Carrie and Justin Leiberling



Donor Spotlight

Carl and Betty Erskine Planned Giving Society

As members of the Carl and Betty Erskine Planned Giving Society, Carrie and Justin Leiberling are committed to lending their support to Special Olympics Indiana long into the future.

Carrie Leiberling serves as Chair of the Special Olympics Board of Directors. She recently sat down and shared why this organization means so much to her and her family.

How did you first get involved with Special Olympics Indiana?

I was looking for a way to get involved with a nonprofit and as a former athlete at a Jesuit high school that prioritized service to others, a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing athletic opportunities to individuals with intellectual disabilities was a perfect fit.

Growing up, some of my classmates had siblings with intellectual disabilities. I knew that they didn't go to our school, but I never knew why. I never thought they were any different from me and never understood that they had needs that my school couldn't accommodate.

As I grew older and had the opportunity to spend time with people with intellectual disabilities, I was overwhelmed and inspired by their optimism, their zest for life and their overall goodheartedness. Our athletes give me perspective. They are grateful to be alive, grateful to be seen, and grateful to be included. They are grateful for things that many of us take for granted every day.

We have a lot to learn from them.

Special Olympics Indiana

What is it about Special Olympics and its mission that drives you to help?

Special Olympics has created a unique environment for fostering inclusion and giving equal opportunities to individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Many people think Special Olympics only provides athletic opportunities for children. Not only do we serve both children and adults, but our mission has expanded into health and wellness, leadership, inclusion education and Unified Sports.

With intellectual disabilities often comes other health issues, and Special Olympics truly is giving these athletes “More Life” by giving them an opportunity to compete and exercise, providing health screenings and improving their mental health by changing societal attitudes towards individuals with intellectual disabilities.

As a board member, how has your involvement and understanding of SOIN grown?

Anyone who attends an event and spends five minutes with an athlete understands “why” we do this. Serving on the board, I’ve learned the “how.”

How did these athletes find out about us? How did we find coaches? How did we organize these games? How did we pay for it all?

To effect change at a high level, we have to understand both.

As a board member, you see how hard our employees work, how difficult fundraising is and what it truly takes to keep this organization running. Our athletes do not pay to participate, so we do not have revenue coming in outside of donations. Every year, we have to meet our budgeted fundraising goal in order to continue to provide the level of service our athletes deserve. Sometimes tough decisions have to be made because we can’t always do everything we want to do. My goal as a board member is to help narrow the gap between what we want to do and what we are able to do.

How has your life been touched by Special Olympics?

During COVID-19, everything shut down, and Special Olympics competitions were canceled. Many of our athletes who already felt disconnected from the rest of society were completely isolated.

For many of our athletes, a Special Olympics event may be the only reason they leave the house in a given week. With that gone, there was a lot of concern about the effect it would have on their mental health.

The Board searched for ideas for how we could keep our athletes engaged until play resumed. But all the while, the athletes took care of it.

They organized remote step competitions and weekly video check-ins. They recorded exercised-themed TikTok videos. They developed unique fundraising opportunities and made sure that no athlete was left behind.

They recognized how important this organization is to its participants and figured out how to provide opportunities for engagement.

That is what keeps me coming back to Special Olympics. The pride that our athletes have in this organization is unlike anything I’ve ever seen.

What made you decide to join the Carl and Betty Erskine Planned Giving Society?

Planned giving is about legacy. What do you want your legacy to be? How do you want to be remembered? What will people say about you after you’re gone? I want to be remembered as someone who had the privilege to serve Special Olympics Indiana.

This organization made me a better person. It has given me more than I could ever hope to give it, and my planned giving is my humble attempt to repay that debt.

CARL AND BETTY ERSKINE PLANNED GIVING SOCIETY

Kevin, Lisa and Gabby Aders
Marjorie Ashby
Sherry and Bill Benner
Mary Bibler
Judi and Phil Bounsall
Carole Caselli
Danny and Deborah Dean
Tom and Deb Easterday
Cathy and John Elzinga
Carl and Betty Erskine
Gary Erskine
Gerald Francis
Rebecca and Michael Furnish
Stanford Goldberg
Julie Goodrich

Richard Edward Hay
Catharine L. Harris
Mary Ellen Hission
James H. Huffman
Victoria Johnson
Phyllis Kingery
Genevieve Kubelius
Larkin (Buzz) Lail
Carrie and Justin Leiberling
John F. McGinty
Lisa and Jeff Mohler
Bob and Susan Pensec
D. Craig Peterson
Barbara Reed

Paul G. Reis and Mo Merhoff
Kelly A. Ries
William Saler
James K. Searles
Mark C. Sherman and Anne Murphy
Karen S. Sostack
Ron and Catherine Stiver
Robert G. and Imogene M. Taylor
James E. Teall
John Vanderbilt
Joan E. Wheatley
Kathy L. Wyman
Jackie Lee York
Robin J. and Brian J. Zipperle

County Programs

Special Olympics Indiana has 69 county programs throughout the state, providing year-round sports training and competition opportunities to more than 19,000 athletes with intellectual disabilities.

County programs have a committee of volunteers led by a county coordinator to facilitate all Special Olympics initiatives locally.

Highlighted below are three county programs at different stages of development.

New Program

Fayette County

Darla Henley had all the motivation she needed to get the Special Olympics Fayette County program up and running again in 2023.



“There were 30 athletes looking to compete and 30 reasons right there to help them,” Henley said.

After a year of learning the ropes and shadowing Henry County’s operation, Henley took the reigns as Fayette County’s Coordinator and launched the program. Starting with bowling,

basketball and track and field, Fayette athletes have a solid base of sports that will grow in time.

Henley relies on her leadership team and other volunteers to provide opportunities for the athletes. She’s learned nobody can go alone and is thankful for all the help she receives – both from other parents and the community at large.

“The community has been very receptive to what we are doing, especially with fundraising,” Hanley said. “We are getting more calls every week from athletes who want to participate. We will adapt and grow with that demand.”



Up-and-Coming Program

Marshall and Starke Counties

Jackie Ziaja had every intention to take things slow in 2023. Basketball and track and field. That was plenty for a new leadership team to oversee.

Then things took off.

“By the end of 2023, we had added swimming, summer bowling, softball, cornhole and fall bowling,” Ziaja said. The county program also plans to add cheer, an Athlete Leadership Council and powerlifting in 2024.

Ziaja and Joe Short were easing into their first year as county coordinators when both the adult and youth basketball teams returned from the state tournament with medals. Suddenly, interest bloomed.

Marshall-Starke athletes were featured in local newspapers and radio reports. Word of mouth spread. Turnout began exceeding capacity.

To accommodate this, Ziaja and Short built a small but nimble management team that assessed situations, made decisions quickly and acted upon them.

That approach has been the core of Marshall-Starke’s success.

“You are going to have volunteers who stand out,” Ziaja said. “Find those people, trust them and rely on them to run the show when you can’t.”

“We identify what works well, and when it doesn’t, we ask why. Don’t be afraid to adjust programs or fundraisers that don’t equal the effort you put into it.”



SOIN COUNTY PROGRAMS Special Olympics Indiana works with 69 County Programs throughout the Hoosier State.

Area 1

Elkhart County
Lake County
LaPorte County
Marshall-Starke Counties
Porter County
St. Joseph County

Area 2

Bartholomew-Brown-Jennings Counties
Clark-Floyd Counties
Harrison County
Jackson County
Jefferson-Switzerland County
Scott County
Washington County

Area 3

Adams-Wells County
Allen County
DeKalb County

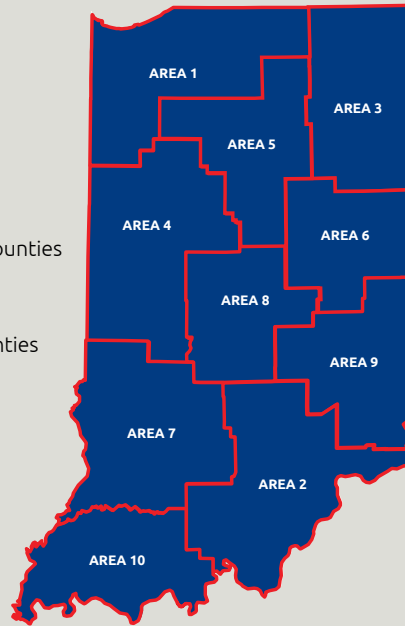
East Allen County
Huntington County
Noble County
Steuben County

Area 4

Benton County
Clinton County
Montgomery-Parke Counties
Putnam County
Tippecanoe County
Warren-Fountain Counties
White County

Area 5

Cass County
Fulton County
Howard County
Kosciusko County
Miami County
Wabash County



Area 6

Delaware County
Grant County
Henry County
Jay County
Madison County
Randolph County

Area 7

Clay County
Daviess County
Greene County
Knox County
Lawrence County
Monroe County
Vigo County

Area 8

Boone County
Hamilton County
Hancock County
Hendricks County
Johnson County

Marion County - East
Marion County - Northeast
Marion County - South
Marion County - West
Morgan County
Washington Township

Area 9

Decatur County
Fayette County
Franklin County
Ripley-Ohio-Dearborn Counties
Shelby County
Wayne County

Area 10

Dubois County
Gibson County
Perry County
Posey County
Vanderburgh County
Warrick County

Established Program

Monroe County

Denise Brown has been part of Monroe County’s leadership team since 2005. She’s seen the county program grow through the years thanks to an adherence to two fundamental tenants — fundraising and volunteer recruitment.

“We’ve found many different ways to raise money, and it’s always something we talk about,” Brown said. “And we have wonderful volunteers on our team, but we are always looking for more.”

Monroe County offers 14 sports, and its Athlete Leadership Council got off the ground in 2022. With an active social media presence and mentorship opportunities for older

athletes to support the younger generations, Brown has been able to turn some of her focus on maximizing external relationships.

Brown and her team also actively engage athletes’ parents and family members to expand their volunteer base and make sure the athletes are there and ready for practice.

The tasks and paperwork have gotten easier over time, and having a resolute support staff is key to that. Brown expects to step back from her coordinator role soon and believes Monroe County will be well-cared for in years to come.

“Continuity is so important,” she said. “As people come and go, everyone understands that Special Olympics is about the athletes getting to participate. Mistakes are made, but the end goal is the athletes getting to do what they came to do.”



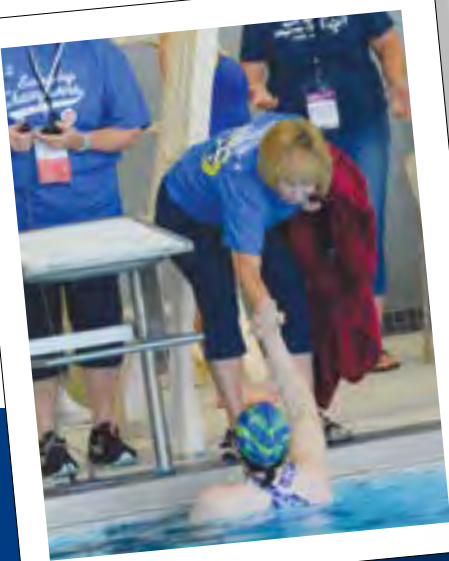
Sports

Special Olympics Indiana offers state-level championships in 18 sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities.

More than 19,000 athletes in 2023 competed at a variety of levels that accommodated their diverse range of abilities, surpassing the pre-pandemic athlete participation rate for the first time.

In 2023, Special Olympics Indiana hosted statewide competitions as well as the Summer Games, EKS Games and Winter Games. Once again, the Men's and Women's State Basketball Tournaments were among the largest Special

Olympics basketball tournaments in North America with more than 100 teams and 885 athletes involved. The 2023 State Bowling Tournament hosted 51 county programs, 1,710 athletes and 153 Unified partner athletes.



Summer Games By The Numbers

- 7** Sports
- 60** County Programs involved
- 2,160** Athletes
- 179** Unified Partners
- 1,079** Coaches
- 1,220** Volunteers

EKS Games By the Numbers

- 8** Sports
- 48** County Programs involved
- 2,038** Athletes
- 480** Unified Partners
- 623** Coaches
- 775** Volunteers



SPECIAL OLYMPICS INDIANA OFFERS THE FOLLOWING SPORTS:

- Alpine Skiing
- Basketball
- Bocce
- Bowling
- Cornhole
- Cycling
- Distance Run and Walk
- Equestrian
- Flag Football
- Golf
- Powerlifting
- Snowboarding
- Snowshoeing
- Soccer
- Softball
- Swimming
- Track and Field
- Volleyball





Unified Champion Schools®

The Unified Champion Schools program aims at promoting social inclusion through intentionally planned and implemented sports, fitness and leadership programming affecting systems-wide change.

The goal is to engage students of all ages and help shape a generation that chooses to include.

Schools must meet 10 standards of excellence to receive this honor. During the 2022-23 school year, three Indiana schools earned the National Banner distinction:

- Franklin Community High School
- O.J. Neighbours Elementary School
- South Ripley High School

O.J. Neighbours became the first elementary school in Indiana to earn the distinction, while South Ripley is the state's first two-time honoree.

At O.J. Neighbours, students worked together on the Unified Robotics team to win its division at the state tournament. Inclusion and cooperation are examples of the culture being fostered at the school every day through robotics, baseball, fitness and other activities.

The school is building a culture of inclusion every day through both participation and leadership as older students lead younger students through scholastic and afterschool activities. These groups also raised funding to help sustain

these opportunities into the future.

South Ripley recently extended its Champions Together program to its middle school and elementary school, providing opportunities for participation in the Unified Champion Schools program at all grade levels. Through this program, high school students lead grade school students in activities, promoting the school's inclusive culture from kindergarten through 12th grade.

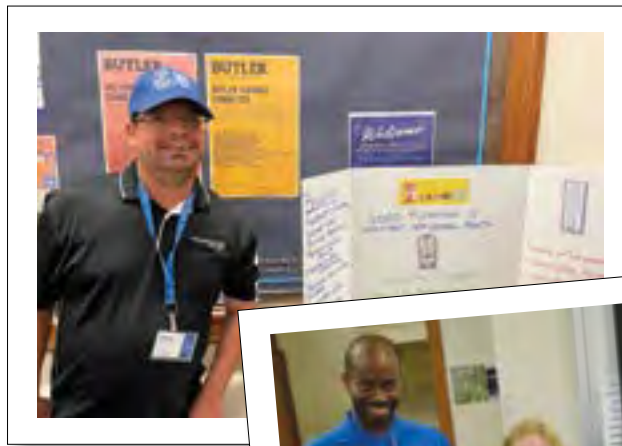
A weekly school radio broadcast keeps students up to date on year-round opportunities to work, plan and play together.

Franklin exemplifies the Unified Champion Schools spirit in the classroom, in the hallways and within competitions through similar programs, earning its first national banner in 2023.

Nineteen Indiana middle schools, 60 elementaries and nearly 70 high school earned Unified Champion School banner status in 2023 by implementing the program's four pillars:

- Inclusive youth leadership opportunities
- Offering Unified Sports / Activities
- Whole school engagement
- Collaborative fundraising

Learn more by visiting SOIndiana.org/schools.



Athlete Leadership

Athlete Leadership University met twice in 2023 at Butler University, where nearly 200 participants learned leadership skills, applied these skills to specialty areas and prepared themselves for leadership opportunities within the organization.

At ALU, attendees select one of seven majors – communication, events, governance, health and fitness, sports, technology or leadership through visual arts. Each major leads to a series of courses culminating in graduation three years later.

ALU graduates often speak publicly with media, at gatherings and during fundraising events about Special Olympics Indiana and its programs, sharing the ways they and others benefit from inclusion. They also can take leadership roles within their county programs and statewide, serving as coaches, advocates and even on the Board of Directors.

There are 49 registered local Athlete Leadership Council programs currently operating under Special Olympics Indiana, and in 2023 the statewide Indiana ALC made

presentations to the Board of Directors with five recommendations based on a year of study and discussion.

Among the other 2023 achievements in athlete leadership:

- Melony Salla of Benton County was selected as a finalist for the Sargent Shriver International Global Messenger program.
- Two Unified pairs (one athlete, one partner) trained in Ohio as part of SONA's Unified Leadership facilitator program. They are Salla, Kendra Franklin, Juanita Garten and Lynne Noble.
- Eight Indiana athletes registered with SOI as Health Messengers, opening opportunities to promote healthy habits at events throughout the region.

2023 ALU By the Numbers

- 27** New athlete leaders
- 46** New mentors
- 10** New instructors
- 13** Graduates



Special Events

Polar Plunge®

More than 3,000 Indiana residents took the plunge in 2023 for what continues to be Special Olympics Indiana's biggest annual fundraiser.

Fifteen communities hosted 17 total plunges, including two dedicated specifically to high school and junior high students.

There were 21 Super Plungers, each of whom raised at least \$4000 and earned a baseball-themed jersey.

Randy Parker of Mount Vernon (Posey County) was the top individual fundraiser with \$13,102. The top fundraising team was Hypothermia, raising \$27,524.

Duke Energy was the presenting sponsor for the 2023 Polar Plunge.

Plane Pull® Challenge

More than 1,000 individuals on 68 teams took on the challenge raising at least \$1,200 and pulling a Boeing 757 jetliner in a massive game of tug-of-war. The goal is 12 feet, but that can seem like miles against 82 tons of airplane.

Butler, Fairman and Seufert, Indiana State Prison, AECOM Hunt-Green Aero, CHAviators and Washington Township SO Can We Get a Woo-Woo each raised more than \$5,000 as teams. The 2023 Plane Pull Challenge was presented by FedEx Express. Other event sponsors included Orchard Software, CHA, Dnata, Weaver Popcorn, Pacers Sports and Entertainment, Markey's, Signarama and media partner WJJK 104.5.

Law Enforcement Torch Run®

Law enforcement officers from across Indiana came together to run alongside Special Olympics athletes in Indianapolis and Terre Haute to signify the start of the Special Olympics Indiana Summer Games.

Officers earn a spot in one of the three-mile runs by raising money to benefit Special Olympics Indiana athletes. The event ends with the lighting of the cauldron during the Opening Ceremony.

The Indiana Law Enforcement Academy had 230 participants that raised \$9,621 to lead group fundraising. Thank you to all the men and women who took part.

Breakfast with Champions

Each year, Breakfast with Champions events highlight the remarkable stories that impact the athletes, coaches and volunteers at the heart of Special Olympics Indiana.

More than 500 community leaders gather at three sites to hear moving testimonials from athletes and a vision of the future from President and CEO Jeff Mohler.

Attendees are encouraged to pledge donations to support the work of Special Olympics Indiana.



Fundraising Events

2023 PLANE PULL®

Champions \$5,000+ Team Captain					
AECOM Hunt - Green Aero Team	Mark Flandermeyer	Shelby County SO Champions	Brian Carrico	Mister Quik Force One	Krystal Bowen
CHAviators	Simon Davies	Shelby County SO Conquerers	Michael VanArsdall	Monroe County SO Cavaliers	Mark Norris
Washington Twsp. SO Can We Get a Woo-Woo?	Kristin Schoonveld	State Farm -Indiana	John Cole	MZZ Mandalorians (FedEx)	Devon Zimmerman
Leadership Circle \$2,000+		Circle of Honor \$1,000+			
Banning Engineering	Jill Clearwater	Autistic Angels	April Huey	National Air Traffic Controllers Association	Jen Rivera
Bearded Villains of Indiana	John Hawxby	Boone County SO Special Forces	Matt Dixon	Outlaw Blasters	Jeanne New
BMW Constructors	Kimberly Blanco	Cargill Cob-fathers	Toni Connell	PCMS Plane Pulling Machines	Nathan Ellis
Body Outfitters Personal Training Studio	Alejandro Jaquez	Carmel Unified	Jamie Stephen	POLARIS Lab Rats	Elaine Hopley
Clark County SO Vikings	Debbie Ferree	FedExcellent Autobots	Devon Zimmerman	Pulltimate Warriors	Margaret Brooks
Etica Group	Megan Scott	Floyd County SO Jazzercise	Julie Fuchs	Rolls-Royce Controls	Justin Vroom
Johnson County Super Troopers	James Engmark	Franklin Community High School	Haley Anderson-Roberts	Shelbyville Golden Bears	Renee Gardner
Kimley-Horn	Eric Fiacable	Ft. Ben Fit	Tony Farison	Special Olympics Indiana Board Training	Scott Furnish
Logansport Juvenile Correctional Facility	Jessica VerBryck	Jackson County	Zach Spicer	Team Reno	Michael Mack
Plainfield Correctional Facility	Antoine Stewart	Knights of Columbus Council 6138	Greg Bendel	The Walsh Group (I69 Finish Line)	Owen Williams
Rehab Medical 1	Kirk Shaffer	Market District Foodies	Iris Abdullah	Thrive Social Club & Single Source Systems	Terri Smith
Rehab Medical 2	Ryan Mullin	Mister Quik	Krystal Bowen	Top Guns	Shane Leisure
Rehab Medical 3	Megan Allen			Wilhelm Warriors	John Knipe
				WVCF 2023	Teresa Littlejohn

2023 POLAR PLUNGE®

Champions \$5,000+					
Steven Binggeli Jr.	Randy S. Parker	Kelsey Sermersheim	The Stout Family	Lindsay C. Hanna	Seth Quinton
Alan Bodenstein	Stacy Reese	Kelly Shields	Kristen Swanson	Steve Hanson	Levi Riggs
Crysta Coble	Brad Schultheis	Katlin D. Slough	Lesley Thomas	Eric Harvey	Rhianna Rugis
Tommy Cohoat	Jeremy Stout	Zach T. Spicer	Doug Todd	Bo Henry	Mary K. Schmitt
Keri Johnson	Rose A. Terwiske	Elizabeth E. Stepek	Becky Warren	Christopher Hile	Nick Schoonveld
Garnett S. Kirk	Douglas Wardlow	Circle of Honor \$1,000+		Thomas Hobbs	Kathy Schroering
Douglas J. Melton	Allison Werne	Todd Alberts	Derek Davis	Sharon Hogue	Ryan Sermersheim
Lynne E. Noble		Caleb Allison	Evelyn Davis	Lexi Holtzman	Wolfgang Shafer
Leadership Circle \$2,000+		Philip Baker	Abby Denney	Jennifer Hoover	Todd Sheely
Alyssa Backes	Dan Holder	Douglas K. Barney	Patrick Derksen	Stacy Howell	Madison Shuman
Bobbie R. Binggeli	Paul F. Jegen	Greg Bendel	Melissa S. Diekelmann	David Joest	Veronika Slivova
Steve L. Binggeli	Paul Kaiser	Valerie Bendel	Craig Discala	Connie A. King	Aidan Smith
Duane Burgess	Chris King	Billy Blundell	Ronald Edwards	Timothy E. Kramer	Michael Smith
Debby Burton	Wesley McKannan	Gerit Bock	Landon Emrick	Kyle Krish	Kristen Swanson
Ryan D. Carr	Kieran McKeever	Devin Brierly	Lisa Emrick	Buzz L. Lail	Rosa Trippel
Scott Cunningham	Jan Meier	Jacob Britt	James Engmark	Stephani M. Lane	Chris Valentine
Katherine B. Custer	Owen Menchhofer	Jennifer L. Brown	Seth Ernstberger	John K. Lentz	Jess Wagner
Cindy M. Denney	Matt Nicholson	Debby Burton	Jeff Franciskovich	Matt Lincoln	Sarah Webster
Scott Ernstberger	Marty Posch	Sierra Carter	Renee Gardner	Mark Maffey	Christopher Wei
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				Tracey M. Paulley	Kristi R. Yarbrough
				Nic Quiett	Dorie Zipperle

The Winner's Circle

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R. Bruce Dye
Patrick L. Foley
Ted Green
Rick L. and Vicki L. James
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Cynthia and Ronald Rossiter
Kevin Symons

\$5,000+

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Betty L. Burton
Anthony Casto
Jacquin Gallagher
Elijah Hammans
Charles Hetrick
Andrew F. Hunnicutt
Chris King
Barbara W. Kroemer
Jennifer Lail
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Elaine Morris
Carolyn Robinson
Mr. and Mrs. Robert V. Rohman Jr.
Trent J. Sandifur
Richard and Pat Schreiner
Margaret Wiley

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Randy Pepmeier
Judy Randall
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Dr. Kimberly Roop

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Lezlie Wood
Devon Zimmermann

\$1,000+

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 James Zink and Matt Holm
 Michael Zweig

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\$50,000+

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 The Fraternal Order of Eagles Indiana State Auxiliary
 Indiana State Aerie
 Fraternal Order of Eagles IHSAA
 JD Finish Line
 Knights of Columbus
 Law Enforcement Torch Run
 United State Sports and Fitness Assoc.

\$20,000+

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 SEI Giving Fund
 Sertoma Club of Broad Ripple
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\$10,000+

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 Emmaus Mission Center Inc.
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 Hendricks County Community Foundation
 Indiana Section PGA of America
 Indianapolis Indians Charities
 KSM Business Services Inc.
 Lions of Indiana Multiple District 25
 Orchard Software
 Texas Christian University
 United States Steel Corporation
 Weaver Popcorn Manufacturing

\$5,000+

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 Easter Seals ARC of NE Indiana
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 Gebhart Holdings, Inc.
 Georgetown Bar and Grill LLC

Grapevine, a DAF of Social Good Fund Inc.
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 Indiana State Prison
 Indianapolis Colts
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 Knox County ARC
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 Muncie Firefighters Local 1348
 Pi Kappa Alpha-Theta Omicron
 Pizzology Partners LLC
 PMG Group Inc./Elvis FANTASY Fest
 Putnam Co. Comprehensive Services
 Residential Clinical Services, Inc.
 Terre Haute Convention and Visitors Bureau
 Toyota Motor North America, Inc.
 United Healthcare
 United States Steel
 USA Up Star LLC
 Valparaiso Kiwanis Club Foundation, Inc.
 Vonne Liche Kennels Inc.
 Westville Correctional Facility

\$2,500+

A.H.E. Plant No. 3 Federal Credit Union
 American Legion Victory Post No. 70
 Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation Inc
 ARC of Carroll County
 Auburn Moose Lodge No. 566
 Buchanan Hauling and Rigging
 Butler, Fairman and Seufert, Inc.
 Charlestown Police Department
 City of Lawrenceburg
 Clear Lake Yacht Club

DEEM, LLC
 Down For A Cure, Inc.
 Eight Eleven Foundation
 Everwise Credit Union
 Everyday Connections
 First Bank Richmond
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 Fulton Liberty Lions Club
 Gaither Charitable Foundation
 Global Plastics
 Golden Post Kennel
 Goodfellows of Kokomo
 Greensburg Rotary Club
 Heartland Career Center
 Hendricks Regional Health
 The Hometown Foundation, Inc.
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 Jasper Lions Club
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Memorial and Honorarium Gifts

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 Adam Campbell
 Adam Swanson
 Amber Pasel of Hickory Stick Golf Course
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 Aubrey Smith
 Bailey Halloran
 Bill Benner
 Billie Dragoo
 Bob Frye
 Bobbie Wiggins
 Bobby Cox
 Buzz Lail
 Carl Erskine & Family
 Carol Sebastian
 Chris Goodrich and all our friends at Washington Township Special Olympics
 Connie Clearwaters & Marcia Thompson

Corinne Smith's 90th birthday
 Dave and Connie King
 David Brown
 Doug Esamann
 Dr. Curran in celebration of MD Day!
 Dr. Kimberly Roop
 Edith Waite
 Eric and Bob Plante
 JD Finish Line Youth Foundation
 Fred & Louise Heber
 Fred and Stella Bishop's 50th wedding anniversary
 Glenn Lyon and Bryan Brenner
 Gloria Wall
 Hannah Young

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TCU baseball
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Jason Glenn
Jenna Korn
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Joseph Loy
Kathryn Jones
Katie, Terri and Bob Williams
Kelley Schreiner
Kyle Ellis
Larry Dewey
Laurie Bloom
Lin Hanna
Lorrie Woycik
Maggie Abell
Mark Kelsch
Mark Zoll
Mary Annette Knauff
Matthew Easterday
Melody Birmingham-Byrd
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Michael Mack
Michael Morris
Michelle Arlo Hacker
Nick Karin

Nora Kiesler and Abby Abel
Patty Pfister
Paul Reis's participation at Mickey's Camp
Randall Watts
Rebecca Owens
Retiring special education teachers Karla Mettert and Anena Rolofson
Rex E. Bond
Richard Meyers
Robbie Ritter
Ruth Thomas
Ryan Steele
S. Feazel
Sandra Weaver and Jada Conner
Scott Shepard
Shannon Smoot and the Misfit Mudders
Sharyn Walther
Shirley Amond
Silas Smith
Simon Downey
Sky Simpson and Chloe Minnaar

Stacey Coleman
Stephannie Simmons
Steve Clouse
Susan Hill
The birth of Adrian G. Paradise and his Grandpa Furnish and Uncle Scott Furnish
The Erskine Society Founding Members
The life and commitment of Wendy Mossler
The members of Friendship Bible Study
The Schreiner Family
The wedding of Mr. and Mrs. David B. Wortman
The work of Robb & Victoria Fine
Tom Easterday
Tommy Walker
Tony Veegh
Veronika Slivova's birthday
William Schlicher



Champion Sponsors



"For more than 40 years, Duke Energy has been a proud sponsor of Special Olympics Indiana. For the athletes and their families, the

games are a source of pride, determination and friendship. For us, it's a chance to support an organization that's championing a culture of inclusion and community. We're grateful for the countless volunteers and staff who give their time and talents to make the year-round programs and events a success. We have seen firsthand the spirit of joy and kindness they cultivate – and the doors they open for those with disabilities."

— Stan Pinegar, Duke Energy



"It's awe-inspiring to see the athletes and law enforcement runners coming through the gates at Victory Field as they make their way through downtown Indianapolis. The comradery warms

my heart, and I'm honored to help organize this memorable experience for the athletes."

— Gregory Dunn, Indiana Department of Correction, Law Enforcement Torch Run



"Whether it's participating in the Polar Plunge or fitting hundreds of athletes in new sneakers, our employees love supporting Special Olympics Indiana!

The joy and smiles from the athletes make every volunteer moment worth it, and JD Finish Line is proud to support this awesome community and organization."

— Marty Posch, JD Finish Line Foundation



"As an Indiana Knights of Columbus member, it has been a pleasure and a privilege to experience for the past 17 years the enthusiasm of the Special Olympics athletes. It is a joy to be associated with an organization like Special Olympics and the individual athletes who have such a caring and positive attitude. We look forward to many more years of our partnership between the Indiana Knights of Columbus and Special Olympics."

— Bill McDonald, Indiana Knight of Columbus State Warden



**Special
Olympics**
Indiana

Special Olympics Indiana is a nonprofit organization that is part of the global Special Olympics movement, created by the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation for the benefit of persons with intellectual disabilities. Special Olympics uses sport, health, education and leadership programs every day around the world to end discrimination against and empower people with intellectual disabilities.

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