

UNIFIED FITNESS CLUBS

INTRODUCTION

Special Olympics Unified Fitness Clubs are locally organized fitness-focused groups that give members a way to exercise year-round. Clubs are formed using the Unified Sports® model, matching people with and without disabilities (partners). While walking is the most common activity, clubs are encouraged to expand the range of activities based on community resources and interests of the group. Clubs earn points by tracking activity data collected from a fitness band, with points accumulated to earn the club and individual members various incentives.

Visit SOIndiana.org/unified-fitness-clubs/ or contact Kyle Moran (kmoran@soindiana.org) for more information.

PURPOSE

Unified Fitness Clubs exist to provide opportunities for Special Olympics athletes, others with intellectual disabilities, and members of the community to engage in regular physical activity that promotes improved health and fitness, better understanding of healthy lifestyles, and friendship.

REGISTRATION

Clubs can register year-round using the online form located at SOIndiana.org/unified-fitness-clubs/. Club members eligible for Special Olympics must be registered as a Special Olympics athlete. Unified Partners must be registered as Class A volunteers.

LEADERSHIP

Unified Fitness Clubs activities must be led by one Special Olympics athlete and one Special Olympics volunteer (known as co-directors) who participate in training in how to run a club.

FITNESS DEVICES

Clubs may choose to upgrade to a Movband5 device for \$30 each. The MovBand5 is a device that is easy to re-charge, syncs wirelessly through a mobile app, and is waterproof. There are some other brands of fitness devices (Fitbit, Apple Watch, Garmin, etc.) that sync with the Engage Moves platform. Special Olympics Indiana handles:

- A. acquisition of Movband fitness devices
- B. the annual cost of UFC members being part of the tracking platform
- C. replacement or repair of broken or lost devices

INCENTIVES

- Individual members receive a special Unified Fitness Club medal once they reach the 500-mile plateau of miles walked or ran as recorded through their device.
- Individuals receive a reward pin when they reach 1,000-, 1,500-, 2,000-, 2,500-, 3,000- and 4,000-mile plateaus.
- Clubs can earn incentives through participation in virtual challenges that are offered at least four times a year.
- Clubs are eligible for incentives only if they collect member health metrics.

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

Any club or member who is inactive for six months will be moved to “inactive status” and must re-register to participate. Any member inactive for one year will result in removal from the Engage Moves tracking platform.

HEALTH METRICS

Unified Fitness Clubs can receive devices to assist in collecting important health metrics from the members (height, weight, and blood pressure). Training will be provided in how to use the devices. Information collected will be used for grant reporting purposes and will remain confidential. Overall results of health metrics collection will be used to document the impact of regular group exercise within Special Olympics.

MEMBERSHIP

- Unified Fitness Clubs are organized by co-directors (one athlete and one partner) who register the club with SO Indiana at SOIndiana.org/unified-fitness-clubs/
- All club members must be registered as SO Indiana athletes or volunteers, with 25-75 percent of members being individuals with ID.



UNIFIED FITNESS CLUBS

- Athletes must be a registered participant, which includes an application, medical form and all necessary forms. A person with ID is not required to be active in Special Olympics training to be a member of a Unified Fitness Club.
- Partners must complete requirements for a Class A volunteer.
- There is no minimum or maximum number of members, but the larger the group the easier it is to match people by ability for training.

PARTICIPATION

- Clubs are expected to organize a group walk (or other activity) at least once a month. Clubs also encourage individual members to be physically active (in safe environment) outside of club activities.
- Walking is suggested to be the main activity because it is appropriate for all levels of fitness, it does not require a facility or equipment, and it helps participants earn miles quickly; however, other fitness activities can be done in conjunction with walking or instead of walking (hiking, stretching, yoga, Zumba, biking, strength training, etc.).
- Fitness Club activities may occur in conjunction with sports practice, but it must be activity beyond sports training or skill development.
- Clubs are year-round, with needed breaks throughout the year. Focusing on eight weeks at a time to meet and plan.
- Periodic “challenges” will be organized to focus training and create intra and inter-club interaction.
- Health metrics, photos, and success stories are requested for grant reports and general publicity.

ACTIVITY TRACKING

- Steps/miles/moves must be tracked through SOIN-provided Movbands or other approved activity trackers, with data synced on the Engage Moves platform weekly.
- Both athletes and partners should use a tracking device (**devices not issued until registration is complete**).

ACTIVE UNIFIED FITNESS CLUBS (as of January 2024)

Benton County	Morgan County	Vanderburgh County
Decatur County	OJ Neighbours Elementary School 1 st /2 nd Grade	Vanderburgh Happy Feet Day Program
Dubois County	OJ Neighbours Elementary School 3 rd /4 th Grade	Washington Township
Johnson County	Porter County	White County
Kosciusko County	St. Joe County Mishawaka YAS	
Lake County	Tippecanoe County	

- To help document the impact of the program, club members are expected to provide health metrics (i.e. height, weight, BP, RHR, steps, and lifestyle survey) at least once a year.
- Clubs and participants earn incentives for reaching various levels of activity.

SO FITNOW APP

SOIN has a new tracking app called SO FitNow, available for download for Apple and Android devices as well as with a website platform. This is another way to track your exercise, water intake, fruits and vegetables, and compete in challenges. SO Fitnow is compatible to sync with other devices or app (Fitbit, Garmin connect, Map My Fitness, Misfit Wearables, Runkeeper, Strava, etc.). The app also allows you to manually enter amount of time for each exercise. Contact Kyle Moran (kmoran@soindiana.org) to create an account on the app.