



Athlete Leadership

Athlete Leadership empowers athletes to develop skills and utilize their voices and abilities to undertake meaningful leadership roles, influence change in the Special Olympics movement and create inclusive communities.

Leadership opportunities for athletes through the Athlete Leadership program include:

- 🌟 **Board of Directors**
- 🌟 **State and/or Area Committee member**
- 🌟 **Games Management**
- 🌟 **Global Messenger**
- 🌟 **Health Messenger**
- 🌟 **Input Council**
- 🌟 **Technology**
- 🌟 **Coaching**
- 🌟 **Volunteer**
- 🌟 **Donor**
- 🌟 **Fund Raising**
- 🌟 **Official**

Having athletes contribute to the leadership of Special Olympics through these roles ensures that our Programs continue to meet athletes' needs and interests.

Who Should Participate in ALPs?

Leadership is a key component in the Athlete Leadership programs. Some of the selection requirements that should be considered are:

- ✓ The athletes should be actively involved as a Special Olympics athlete, coach or official.
- ✓ The athlete must have a valid medical application on file with Special Olympics Illinois.
- ✓ The athlete should be involved in competition so that they are familiar with the various programs and competitions in their region.
- ✓ Athlete should be able to communicate effectively and have the ability to be understood when speaking. This could also include non-verbal communication methods such as sign language or effective use of other communication devices.
- ✓ Athlete must demonstrate appropriate behaviors; i.e. gets along with others, has positive outlook, is dependable, and demonstrates polite behaviors and good sportsmanship. Willingness to help when needed and motivate others are also good behaviors to look for.
- ✓ Athlete must be able to attend workshops (1-2 per year) and speech presentations (approximately 4-6 per year)
- ✓ Ability to form and articulate their own opinion
- ✓ Enthusiasm relating to participation in Special Olympics
- ✓ Time to prepare & make speeches
- ✓ The greatest indicator of an athlete's qualification to participate in these workshops is genuine interest. Our athletes have proven throughout history, that if they really want to do something they can do it. It is our job to facilitate their success

Athlete Leadership Program Opportunities with Special Olympics Illinois

Athlete Input Council - Input Councils provide a forum for athletes to report to other athletes and Program leaders on what is happening in their regions, voice their opinions about important issues, and gain leadership training and experience. The councils allow athletes more opportunities to become involved in all aspects of Special Olympics operation on a personal level.

Governance - The Governance workshop prepares athletes to participate in Special Olympics programming and policy dialogue through membership on Boards or local committees. Training focuses on awareness and listening skills for not only athletes but also for volunteers, staff and family members with whom they interact.

Global Messengers - Global Messengers are Special Olympics athletes who help spread the message and vision of the movement as well as the benefits they have gained by participating in Special Olympics. As leaders and message-bearers of the movement, Global Messengers communicate the hope, acceptance, respect and courage of Special Olympics athletes around the world. Only athletes can effectively relate the impact that the movement has had on their lives and lives of their families.

The program offers public speaking and presentation skills training to athletes interested in representing Special Olympics. Athletes who have gone through the training act as ambassadors advocating the benefits of sports training and competition, and recruit others to participate.

Leadership – Athletes are encouraged to be involved in leadership roles across all areas of the organization including State and Area event, fundraising and other committees; team captains and managers; coaching; healthy lifestyle; volunteering; fund raising etc. Leadership training is provided through the Athlete Leadership program to develop skills and foster opportunities for involvement.

Health Messengers – Athletes trained to help promote and encourage healthy lifestyles including nutrition, fitness and strong minds.

For more information on Athlete Leadership or to complete the Athlete Interest Form, visit the Special Olympics Illinois website <http://www.soill.org/athlete-leadership-programs> .

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