



- **14 million** – Annual budget for Special Olympics Illinois
- **42,865** – Total participations in competition events by athletes
- **40,000** – Illinois volunteers
- **22,647** – Illinois athletes (age 8-80+)
- **19,927** – Young Athletes & Peer Partners (ages 2-7)
- **2,209** – Coaches with a valid sports certification
- **881** – Number of agencies statewide through which athletes compete
- **196** – Sanctioned Special Olympics competition events annually in Illinois
- **17** – Different sports in which athletes can compete
- **0** – Amount that Special Olympics charges athletes/their families for its services

Did you know. . .

- Six out of ten people have a direct or indirect connection to Special Olympics
- Over 70% of persons with intellectual disabilities are capable of performing at higher levels than the people around them expect.
- During the Special Olympics World Summer Games in Dublin, Ireland, 38 individual Special Olympics athletes' performances were better than performances by world athletes in the International Olympics Summer Games--not Special Olympics--in Athens, Greece.
- Children who join Special Olympics will often compete for a decade or more! Including our Young Athletes Program, we have more than 20,000 youth (age 2 – 18) across the state participating in our programs.
- At the other end of the age spectrum, over 2,200 athletes age 55 and older compete regularly.

The Sports*

- alpine skiing
- athletics (track & field)
- basketball
- bocce
- bowling
- equestrian
- flag football
- floor hockey
- golf
- gymnastics
- power lifting
- soccer (football)
- snowshoeing
- softball
- swimming
- tennis
- volleyball

***For each sport, Special Olympics Illinois provides facilities, equipment, security, volunteer T-shirts, on-site medical teams, and meals for athletes, coaches and volunteers.**

Special Olympics depends entirely on donations from individuals and businesses in Illinois—we receive no government funding and we are not a United Way organization. The percentage of dollars raised that is applied directly to program services (77%) exceeds the benchmarks set by the Council of Better Business Bureaus (65%) and the National Charities Information bureau (60%).

Real Sports. Real People. Real Special. . .Special Olympics is more than you think.

For over forty years, Special Olympics has been the leader in helping individuals with intellectual disabilities find their voice and their strengths through the platform of sports training and competition. It was launched in July of 1968 when 1,000 athletes with intellectual disabilities, from 26 states and Canada, came to Chicago's Soldier Field to compete in Olympic-styled track & field events. Today, Special Olympics is a movement that reaches over 4.9 million athletes worldwide, and remains a powerful agent of change here in Illinois—particularly in the greater Chicago area.

Special Olympics Illinois (SOILL) has its headquarters is located in central Illinois, and regional offices in Lombard and Highland. SOILL has been actively working in the Illinois —managing relationships between various Public Schools, Park Districts and partner agencies who are engaged in special recreation programs—to empower individuals with intellectual disabilities to become physically fit, more self-sufficient and productive members of the community.

And it's a challenge. Individuals with intellectual disabilities keep a low profile. Difficulties communicating, a lack of meaningful opportunities to interact with others, geographic isolation, and awkwardness tied to self-perception lead them to live withdrawn, solitary lives. And too often, these individuals are not given the chance to speak; they are spoken for, or about. But we have a program that gives athletes the opportunity to relate, in their own words, what is important in their lives, including Special Olympics. Athletes who complete this unique course have a title as noble as their efforts: Global Messengers.

The courage to try. The courage to compete. The courage to speak. As they grow more confident through the successes they achieve on the field, and comfortable through the friendships they develop on the sidelines, maturing athletes actively seek ways to communicate their personal stories of hope, victory and acceptance to others. And we understand that they can best tell us what effect the movement has had on their lives and the lives of their families.