

# Colleen Costello

*Special  
Olympics  
Illinois*



**Sport: Gymnastics**  
**Hometown: Millstadt, IL**  
**Age: 35**

## **1. How long have you been with Special Olympics?**

I first started as a swimmer 26 years ago. At the same time, I started to going to the gym with Coach Jenny. She and I have been together for 25 years! Over the years, I have competed in equestrian, bowling, bocce, and snowshoeing. Right now, I'm in gymnastics, swimming, and snowshoeing.

I'm also a Global Messenger, a board member on our local agency's board, and a board member for SOILL.

I'm really good at Polar Plunge -- the Dumpster Plunge in Belleville is my favorite!

## **2. How has Special Olympics changed your life?**

If I didn't have Special Olympics, my life would be boring. Most of what I do is connected to Special Olympics in some way; practices, meetings, speeches, and social activities are all things that I wouldn't have.

I am proud of what I'm doing because I have learned a lot through Special Olympics.

## **3. What has been your biggest obstacle to overcome?**

I've been really lucky. Every time I wanted to do something, someone was there to help me. I wanted to go to Special Olympics in gymnastics and Coach Jenny started a team for me. I wanted to go to Special Olympics in equestrian and my trainer started a team for me. I wanted to try snowshoe, and PTOEC started a snowshoe team. The only challenge I really have is trying to get better at what I do.

## **4. What makes you most proud?**

I am most proud of all the gold medals I have earned. My favorite medals are the big ones I won as a gymnast at the 2006 National Games. I'm also proud of all of the speeches I have done as a Global Messenger. My favorites are the Law Enforcement Torch Run speech I gave at a golf tournament and the one I gave at the family reception at my very first state winter games in 2014.



**SPECIAL OLYMPICS  
USA GAMES  
ORLANDO 2022**

### **5. What are some other accomplishments you are proud of?**

I compete in local equestrian shows (not Special Olympics) in the hunter-jumper classes. I've gotten a lot of ribbons at different shows. Right now, I'm practicing three different types of gymnastics: artistic, rhythmic, and trampoline/tumbling. I have competed in the trampoline/tumbling at the USA Games in Georgia in the HUGS division and I got two first place ribbons in level two.

### **6. What other interests or hobbies do you have?**

My family does a lot of camping over the summer in our camper. My favorite part is when we get to go swimming in a lake.

Our local agency, PTOEC, sponsors a lot of fun social events - like movie nights, dances, bingo, apple-picking – which I always participate in.

I participate in a lot of activities through my church and my community. I like the homecoming parade, the church picnic, and the Millstadt lighted parade at Christmas.

I have a really big stuffed animal collection and I like to collect t-shirts everywhere I go.

### **7. Who do you admire most and why?**

I admire my gymnastics coach because she is so friendly and nice to me. She gives me tips on skills I've never done and she always encourages me to do my best. I'm so glad that she's going with me to USA Games!

### **8. What does attending USA Games mean to you?**

I like to compete, and going to the games means I'll be competing in gymnastics at the highest level. I look forward to seeing the opening ceremonies. I know I will have fun and make new friends.

### **9. How are you preparing/training for USA Games?**

Practice, practice, practice. I have four gymnastics classes a week, including the Champions class online on Saturday mornings. I build my endurance with swimming laps two days a week. I just joined a new gym so I can work out to get stronger. Practices for snowshoe starts soon so I will be running a lot. I work on sports all year and stay active.

### **10. Have you been to a World Games or USA Games before?**

I was on the SOILL gymnastics team at the first National Games, the "Games at Ames," in 2006. I took gold in the all-around competition in my division.

### **11. Are you employed? If so, where at and what's your role?**

I work at St. James School in Millstadt, where I help in the cafeteria. I also volunteer at the Millstadt Senior Center three days a week in the kitchen to help with meals on wheels, running errands, and helping any way I can. I work at Briarstone Riding Academy where I help take care of horses. My trainer says I'm a horse whisperer!

### **12. Are you currently a student? If so, where and is it a Unified Champion School?**

No

