

# Katrina Hassman

*Special  
Olympics  
Illinois*



**Sport: Youth Leadership Experience**  
**Hometown: Park Ridge, IL**  
**Age: 17**

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

I've been involved with Special Olympics since my freshman year in high school. Even though I didn't participate in any Unified sports until this year, I was always my school's biggest supporter on the sidelines. I endured the cold to cheer on my friends at the snowshoe events in January of 2020 and that's when I knew I wanted to be a part of Special Olympics indefinitely. I am on the Illinois Youth Activation Committee and a virtual volunteer for Special Olympics Illinois. I participate in Unified bowling and I even did Unified bass fishing.

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

Special Olympics has changed my life by introducing me to my best friend and Unified partner, Jake! Special Olympics has made me a much stronger leader and a better person overall. I've been presented with so many once-in-a-lifetime opportunities that I will never forget. Special Olympics also inspired me to pursue a career involving children with disabilities, which I wouldn't have considered before I got involved with Special Olympics.

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

The biggest obstacle that I have overcome is not very big, but I still had to persevere and get past it. The summer before my freshman year, the muscles in my dominant arm started to tear and I had to stop playing all sports. This was really tough for me because I had to watch an entire softball season go past without ever getting to play. Once the high school season came around, my arm still wasn't ready to play again and I was going to have to decide to miss another softball season or to play through the pain. COVID ended up canceling our season though so I never had to make the decision and my arm fully healed during quarantine.

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

I am most proud when something I'm part of succeeds. It could be a great softball game, a beautiful musical performance, or even a super fun Hawk Pals event where everyone is smiling and having a great time.

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

I am a drumline section leader for my school's band. Next year, I will co-lead the Illinois Youth Activation Committee. I enjoy all sciences and have won multiple science awards at my school. I am a part of National Honor Society.



**SPECIAL OLYMPICS  
USA GAMES  
ORLANDO 2022**

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

I play percussion in my school's concert band and snare drum in our marching band. I am on the varsity softball team at my school and also enjoy playing tennis, badminton, and volleyball. I am an officer for my school's inclusion club, Hawk Pals. I volunteer whenever I get the chance, and I teach classes at my church. I also love to babysit and play video games with my brothers.

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

The person I admire most is my grandpa. He is the most hardworking, kind, generous, and humble person I know. He is the best dad, husband, and grandfather who always put the needs of others first. I can only dream to be as selfless and incredible as he is.

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

Attending the 2022 USA Games is such an honor to me. There are times when I can't believe I'm actually going to attend the games; it seems like something out of a movie, not something that could actually happen to me. I can't wait to meet so many talented and amazing people at USA Games!

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

I am preparing for the 2022 USA Games by attending leadership meetings, training events, and seminars to get ready to lead at the games.

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

This will be my first time attending USA Games.

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

I work for the Maine-Niles Association of Special Recreation in the summer as an inclusion companion. I serve as an aide at summer camps for kids ages 3-13.

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

I am a student at Maine South High School, which is a Unified Champion School.

