



Coach - Athletics
Hometown: Oak Park, IL

1. How long have you been with Special Olympics?

This will be my eleventh year coaching Special Olympics! I currently coach Special Olympics soccer, basketball, athletics, rhythmic gymnastics, bowling, golf, and Young Athletes (2-7 year olds). I have also coached bocce ball in the past. I always think that I am maxed out with sports that I have time to coach until I learn about a new sport! Can't get enough of coaching Special Olympics - one of my passions in life!

2. How has Special Olympics changed your life?

Special Olympics is not just in me, it is me! I coach Special Olympics sports almost every week of the entire school year. In the summer when we do not have sports I frequently hang out with my athletes and families and continue playing the sports together (i.e. golf outings that I participate in with my athletes). Special Olympics is a part of who I am as a person and I could not be happier!

3. What has been your biggest obstacle to overcome?

The biggest problem that I have overcome with Special Olympics is when we first started 11 years ago. We had no budget, no bussing, and no space to practice. All of the general education teams had all of these items at their disposal. Now our teams have access to all of our gyms and outdoor fields for practices. Special Olympics is recognized at our school's award banquets and we have similar budgets to all of the general education teams. We have turned the barriers that started out as challenges years ago into strengths in our district!

4. What makes you most proud?

A few years ago, I had a family who was reluctant to have their child with a disability join Special Olympics. I pushed the family to try our rhythmic gymnastics, and after a few years of practicing, I was very proud to see this athlete first qualify for the state competition and then earn a gold medal at state! My athletes never cease to amaze me and I could not be prouder of their accomplishments.

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

We recently became a Unified Champion National Banner School. We are very proud of this recognition of our inclusive opportunities that we offer at the school and are one of three new schools in Illinois chosen for that recognition this school year. is very admirable



6. What other interests or hobbies do you have?

For my personal hobby, I am obsessed with disc golfing and frequently play with my three and six year old girls. Also, in my community of Oak Park I lead a fun yearly Battle of the Badges event where our Special Olympics athletes play a basketball game alongside Oak Park's police and fire department. We usually have a few hundred people there either playing or watching, which is very fun times!

7. Who do you admire most and why?

This is an easy choice for me. One of our Special Olympics athletes who is 12 years old, who I have known since she was three years old, I admire the most. She recently had a major medical procedure with her heart, which lasted almost an entire year (everything turned out good). Before her procedure she joined our practices virtually from out of state and participated with our Special Olympics rhythmic gymnastics team and rocked it always with a smile! I admire her more than anyone else in the world because of her perseverance.

8. What does attending USA Games mean to you?

Four years ago, when I watched the USA Games on television I kept wishing that I was there. The opportunity to walk with our athletes through opening ceremonies and to challenge my athletes to be the best that they can be gives me chills to think about. I look forward to the lifelong friendships and relationships that I will create and cannot wait to represent Illinois as a coach for Special Olympics.

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

As the athletics coach, I am excited to meet our athletes and other coaches that will be competing in the USA Games soon. I have been researching new training techniques for athletics and am looking forward to trying them out with our team. I look forward to participating with the drills/training alongside our athletes!

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

This is my first time coaching at USA Games and I could not be more excited! Four years ago we had two of our bocce athletes qualify and attend the USA Games. Since learning about their experience, I have been hooked and I am so excited that I will have the opportunity to coach athletics.

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

I am in my twelfth year as the adapted physical education teacher in District 97 elementary and middle schools in Oak Park, Illinois. I started Special Olympics 11 year ago in our district and currently coach seven different Special Olympics sports throughout the year.

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

I am an adapted physical education teacher and Special Olympics coach for District 97 elementary and middle schools in Oak Park, IL. Yes, my elementary school and middle school where I teach are Unified Champion Schools. All of our Special Olympics teams are Unified (i.e. include students with and without disabilities) or have peer coaches (i.e. students without disabilities as coaches).

