

# Karyn Mrotek

*Special  
Olympics  
Illinois*



**Sport: Bocce**  
**Hometown: Palos Heights, IL**  
**Age: 43**

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

She has participated for 32 years in Special Olympics. During the younger years, Karyn tried most every sport—figure and speed skating, gymnastics, basketball, floor hockey, track and field, soccer, and bowling. In 2013, Karyn switched focus from the very athletic sports to concentrate on bowling, bocce, and racewalk. This was the year she became a Global Messenger, which she currently participates in and enjoys all the speeches and friends she's met.

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

Special Olympics has provided confidence, fun, and socialization as well as success in competitions. Karyn did things she never thought she could and is so proud of all the medals she has. She has life-long friends and families that we've shared the Special Olympics journey with.

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

Karyn was not always the "best" or most coordinated athlete. She wanted to compete and it didn't matter that she won her share of fourth place ribbons. She was never discouraged and always took her award with a smile on her face happy for her friends who completed with her. Being 4'7" and not very fast can be a big challenge in many sports.

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

She is most proud when she does her best and is rewarded. Everyone comes to cheer her on, and she spends time with her friends and coaches.

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

Karyn loved going to all the Illinois state Special Olympics games. We have family all over the state and they were always there to support her. She is a Global Messenger and looks forward to creating a speech for different groups. She does a great job. Karyn worked at a movie theater for 15 years. She worked very hard and took such pride in her job.



**SPECIAL OLYMPICS  
USA GAMES  
ORLANDO 2022**

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

Karyn volunteered at our local hospital in the kitchen. She takes piano lessons and likes to hang out with her niece and nephew. Her favorite thing to do is to have a quiet day where she can watch sports from morning until night. Her favorite football teams are Bears and Illinois. In baseball, she is a CUBS fan first but watches the White Sox too. Also a big FRIENDS fan.

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

She admires her coaches at the park and her mom, Adele.

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

I'm looking forward to being with all the coaches and athletes. I can't wait for opening ceremonies -- I've only seen these on TV. I want to do my best and make everyone, especially myself, proud of me. I can't wait for June.

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

Just won a gold medal in bocce at our regional meet. I will keep up with training all winter and look forward to meeting my new coach.

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

This is the first time. It's something we never thought would happen for us. We are so excited!

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

Not currently because of COVID. Hopefully, a community job will happen in the next couple months. She previously worked in a movie theater for 15 years making sure the lobby was in the best order. Karyn received Employee of the Month reward several times there.

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

She is out of school and attending a program called CHOICE where she does activities in the community and participates in various activity clubs.

