



Coach - Swimming Hometown: Chicago, IL

1. How long have you been with Special Olympics?

I have coached Special Olympics for 15 years. I started by coaching basketball at the high school where I teach. I then started the track program a few years later. My main coaching experience has been through Willowbrook High School but I also volunteer for other sports like weightlifting and bowling. Four years ago, I also had the honor of coaching athletics at the USA Games in Seattle!

2. How has Special Olympics changed your life?

I always tell people how seeing the world through my Special Olympics athletes' lives has changed my life. MANY of the people in this community lead with joy and acceptance. That has made me want to emulate that. I also have learned about all types of learners and thinkers which has broadened my scope as a teacher and person.

3. What has been your biggest obstacle to overcome?

I would say probably knowing what my strengths were. I always struggled to know and embrace what I was good at rather than comparing my talents/gifts to others.

4. What makes you most proud?

Honestly, watching my old students and athletes achieve their goals and go into the world as caring, compassionate members of society.

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

N/A

6. What other interests or hobbies do you have?

I volunteer for M3 (my block, my hood, my city) which is a Chicago-based organization that brings access to various communities. I also have volunteered for Coffee, Hip Hop & Mental Health (another Chicago based organization that prioritizes mental health access). Even though I coach, I volunteer for Special Olympics outside of my school and sports. Lastly, I have coached IHSA girls swimming for the past 14 years



7. Who do you admire most and why?

I admire all of my athletes but I most admire an athlete who I coached about 10 years ago. His name is Ahmad and we keep in great touch mostly because he calls to check in on me. He has brightened my day (and so many others that I know) on so many occasions. He is the kindest, most genuine, most generous person I know. He has more friends than any person I know! One year on my birthday he walked over three miles to get me a gift card with the money he had in his pocket and delivered it to me. He doesn't let anything get in the way of treating others with care.

8. What does attending USA Games mean to you?

I look forward to getting to know more athletes and getting to see the FUN they have. Four years ago was a truly wonderful experience and I can only imagine this will be too!

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

I will prepare my athletes by gathering them to team build and train.

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

Four years ago I coached in the Seattle USA Games as one of the athletics coaches

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

Yes, I am an English & ELL teacher at Willowbrook High School

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

No

