

# Special Olympics 2015

## INTRODUCTION



*No matter what culture, every country brings a sense of pride to the Olympics. The competition, the support and the united nations come together to compete in multiple events. These world games don't occur every year, which make them even more intense than other seasonal athletics. But what about the Special Olympics? This event is unique in that it isn't about the competition and pride but rather the support and respect for the intellectually disabled athletes from all over the world. Instead of working to be the best, these athletes try to be their own best which makes this event more meaningful than the other Olympics. This past year, the games were held right in our neighborhood in Los Angeles. You might have heard a lot about it since surrounding cities supported the event. In fact, Alhambra housed some of the athletes from Japan. In this special feature, you can find out about the history, mission, disabilities, events and meaning behind the Special Olympics.*

SIMEON LAM, SPORTS EDITOR

## HISTORY

Every two years the Special Olympics occur, bringing together 165 nations and over 6,000 athletes to celebrate athletic accomplishment, unity and dignity. It all started in the 1960s when Eunice Shriver noticed the unfair treatment of children with intellectual disabilities. From a young age, she quickly developed a passion for sports. After graduating from Stanford, Shriver worked for many juvenile departments. As she noticed the treatment of children with disabilities, Shriver held summer camps in her own backyard for these children and observed their athletic abilities. Through the 1960s, Shriver continued her work, working for the equality of people with intellectual disabilities. Her efforts would eventually turn into the Special Olympics.

After working with the Joseph P. Kennedy foundation and Dr. William Freeberg of Southern Illinois University, the first ever Special Olympics was held on July 20, 1968 in Chicago. This first event brought together about 1,000 athletes from the United States and Canada to compete in sports such as track and field, swimming and floor hockey. With this event, Shriver hoped to set aside intellectual differences, instead focusing on the ideas of athletics and acceptance.

Fast forward 47 years and the Special Olympics has become one of the biggest events in the world. This past summer, the event was held for the 24th time, attracting supporters from all around the globe. Broadcasted to viewers across six continents, what was once a bright idea by a woman in Chicago has become a worldwide event, bringing ideas of acceptance and inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities.

ERIC HUANG, STAFF WRITER

## COMPETITIONS

The most recent summer Special Olympics offered over 20 sports for athletes to compete in. Some of the sports included basketball, volleyball, soccer and many more. Others interesting events were sailing, bowling and powerlifting.

In basketball, the teams were split up into many divisions to ensure that athletes got paired with other athletes with similar physical traits. Division 1, the highest division, was won by Australia. Greece came in second place and Russia came in third place.

In volleyball, Russia took first place. Croatia came in second place while Bharat took 3rd place. The volleyball teams consisted of around 10-12 players each.

In the soccer events, there were 5-A-Side teams, 7-A-Side, and 11-A-Side events. This determines how many players are on the field for each team. For the 11-A-Side event, Great Britain came in first place and Bangladesh came in second place.

One sport that stood out was sailing. In this sport, athletes compete to race through a pre-made route. Athletes had to steer their boats to the finish line in the fastest time. Austria came in first place, Russia came in second and the USA-South Carolina team came in third place. Many of athletes won and lost, but at the end, the fun and pride that these athletes gain from these events are more important than just winning.

ALEX LIN, STAFF WRITER

## DISABILITIES

There are a lot of people with intellectual disabilities that like to play sports. It is a condition when people learn and develop things more slowly. It is very common worldwide; about 6.5 million people in the United States have some sort of this disability. This happens when there is a disease or a problem that is caused in the brain or due to abnormal genes, inherited by parents or birth defects. Autism, Down syndrome and cerebral palsy are some examples of this. But this does not mean that people with intellectual disabilities cannot learn or do the same things like others. People with intellectual disabilities inspire the Special Olympics events all around the world. The Special Olympics is a significant way to support the two hundred million people with a disability. About 4.5 million athletes participate in this event. It helps them feel proud about their accomplishments and helps them sustain and maintain an occupation or become leaders in society in the future.

VIVIANNE LAM, STAFF WRITER

## MISSION/GOALS

The Special Olympics is an international non-profit organization that is dedicated to the empowerment of individuals with intellectual disabilities and is fully invested in seeing that the athletes are physically fit, productive and respected members of society. The Special Olympics' mission is to give all competitors year-round training along with athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports to children and adults with intellectual disabilities. Another important part of their mission is to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, along with skills and friendship with their loved ones.

The current goals of the Special Olympics are to achieve high quality growth by creating innovative opportunities to those who wish to participate. The committee in charge also wishes to create positive attitudes for the 190 million people with intellectual disabilities. Promotion of athletic leadership and the empowerment of dignity is also a very sought after goal. Lastly, the Special Olympics hopes to change negative attitudes and misconceptions about people with intellectual disabilities by replacing stigma and rejection with an emphasis on potential, ability and acceptance.

BEN LANGE, STAFF WRITER

## PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

The Special Olympics is an outstanding event that shows that a disability cannot stop one from dreaming big and doing astonishing things. These special athletes jumped over their obstacles and went for the gold. "After being a part of this event, I consider these the best athletes in the world," former athlete Dustin Plunkett said, according to the Special Olympics website.

He discusses the struggles of becoming an Olympic athlete. They work extremely hard to get to where they are and their hard work is paid off with the recognition and they receive their supporters from everyone.

"I feel stronger. I can run faster. I can do it on my own and I never give up," 2015 athlete Molly Hincka said.

She believes she can not only be great but win. She is one of the many athletes that showcased her talents in these special games. Whether the Special Olympics are your cup or tea or not, there is still a level of respect for the athletes and the accomplishments they achieved. Even if they didn't win, they still achieved their goal by competing in the Olympics. You see that on the facial expressions given after they win or lose, they still have a bright smile on their face.

JOSHUA MORELION, STAFF WRITER

## SOURCES

www.la2015.org  
www.specialolympics.org

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