



***Special  
Olympics***  
*Ontario*

# **Athlete**

Media & Public Relations  
Handbook

# Table of Contents

1. Table of Contents.....	2
2. Athlete Ambassador’s Role and Responsibilities.....	3
3. Why do we use the Media.....	5
4. Media Contact Lists.....	6
5. What’s the Message.....	10
6. Your Story.....	12
7. Newsworthy Stories.....	14
8. Reaching the Media.....	16
9. Getting all of the Facts.....	17
10. Making Sure the Media Listens.....	19
11. Tips for Success.....	21
12. Appendices	
A. Sample Media Release.....	23
B. Language Guidelines.....	24
C. Athletes Rights and Responsibilities.....	30
D. Special Olympics History.....	33
E. Contact Lists.....	37



## **Athlete Ambassador's Role and Responsibilities**

Athlete Ambassadors are representatives for their community and act as a voice bridging the Provincial Office and the Empowerment Committee to their peers. Athlete Ambassadors are responsible for bringing concerns, questions, ideas and issues from the athletes in their community to the Athlete Empowerment Committee.

Athlete Ambassadors are expected to be able to allot 10 hours a month to the position through access of e-mails, phone conferences and meetings or events. Athlete Ambassadors will be called on to be role models to their fellow athletes by practicing empowerment and helping other athletes to understand and participate in the empowerment process. Athlete Ambassadors have access to Speaker's Training and may be asked to promote their community, region or province by speaking to service groups, potential volunteers, athletes or the media.



As an Athlete Ambassador it is important to realize that you are representing the organization and your fellow athletes when you participate in Special Olympics events and even when you wear your team uniform. To look good and feel good you should always complete the following tasks:

- ☺ Shower or Bath and make sure to wash your hair
- ☺ Brush your teeth and hair and wash your face
- ☺ Dress in clean clothes
  
- ☺ Make sure you eat a healthy meal to keep your energy up
  
- ☺ Know the topic you are going to be speaking about and be comfortable with the topic and with questions you may be asked.



## Why do we use the Media?

Media is a powerful tool that can be used to do the following:

- Create knowledge and awareness about the organization
- Promote our events and activities
- Recruit more athletes, families, volunteers and sponsors
- Educate people about the abilities of people with intellectual disabilities in sport
- Generate support



## Media Contact Lists

You should create a media contact list and always keep it handy so you will know who to contact if an event or news story comes up. You can check with your city hall to see if they have a media contact list already developed. Another good place to check is with your community council. Before contacting the media always check with your council or Public Relations coordinator to make sure they haven't already contact the media about the same event. If you don't have access to a media contact list you can creating your own by following these steps: Begin by making a list of all the media that covers your community (newspapers, radio stations, local TV stations, and magazines). Then call or check online for the name, title, extension, e-mail address and fax number for the person in charge of reporting on sports and community interest stories.



# Media Contact List Getting Started...

Use the following sheets to create your own Media List!

List all of the media sources you know of in your community:

Newspapers: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Radio Stations: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

TV Stations: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Magazines: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

Community Flyers: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---



<b>Media</b>	<b>Contact Name</b>	<b>Title (column or show)</b>	<b>Phone #</b>	<b>Fax #</b>	<b>e-mail</b>

Special Olympics provides year round sports training and competition opportunities to individuals with an intellectual disability

We train and work just as hard as everyone else, don't look down on us.

-Jon Adlington, Tillsonburg

## SHARE THE DREAM

*SPECIAL OLYMPICS CANADA IS DEDICATED TO ENRICHING THE LIVES OF CANADIANS WITH AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY THROUGH SPORT*

## WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

"We are Special Olympics athletes, but we are also people. Special Olympics is a sports organization, but it's a family too.

We compete, but we have fun.

We train for competitions, but we learn skills for life."

-Kim Sullivan, Georgetown

Paralympics is a separate organization for individuals with a physical disability

## WINNING AT LIFE



"Special Olympics Ontario is not a one day event. We train and participate in sports year round and we are one big happy family!"

-Troy Ford-King, Mississauga

## ***WE ARE ATHLETES***

*Let me win,  
But if I cannot win,  
Let me be brave in the  
attempt!*

## **WHAT'S YOUR MESSAGE?**

Use this space to list things you would like people to understand about Special Olympics!

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Your Story

Before you approach the media you should take some time to write down Your Story. You can use this page to write down Your Story. Keep it close so that you are always prepared when an interviewer asks you personal questions!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Community: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

How many in your family: \_\_\_\_\_

SOO Sports: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Where do you go to school/work? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How many years have you been involved in SOO? \_\_\_\_\_

How did you get involved? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



What do you like best about SOO?

---

---

---

Why is SOO important?

---

---

---

What would you say to someone that is thinking about getting involved in SOO?

---

---

---

---

---

---



## News-worthy Stories

Now that you have thought about the message you would like to present and have created Your Story it's time to go look for things happening in your community that are news worthy.

- Check in with your community council to find out about upcoming events and how you can help in promoting them
- Talk to other athletes in your community and find out Their Stories including information about how SOO have effected their lives

The following is a list of things that you can try to promote through the media:

- New Sport Clubs in your community
- Fundraisers
- Service awards (let the media know about what a fantastic job your coaches and volunteers are doing for you)
- Award Banquets or Social events
- Community or Regional games and tournaments



- Outstanding athletes and volunteers
- The need for new athletes or volunteers
- Registration and information nights

When you have a story that you would like to approach the media with make sure you talk to your community council and see if they can help you or provide you with more information for your story.

### Advice from your fellow Ambassadors

**Jon says:** Research to get a good story!

**Kim says:** A good story grabs you and makes you want to help, share and become involved!



## Reaching the Media

There are a number of ways to contact the media: telephone calls, e-mails, news releases, websites and by sending them invitations to events.

When sending e-mails or news releases make sure to include the key information (WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY and HOW) in the first couple of paragraphs. Please see Appendix A for an example of a news release.

You should always have someone from your community council help you proof read anything you are sending out to the media.



## Getting all of the Facts

To make sure you have all of the information you need to give the media make sure you fill in the following list for yourself:

WHO (is going to be at the event or is going to benefit): \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

WHAT (is happening): \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

WHERE (include all location details): \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---



WHEN (date, time, rain dateT): \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

WHY (is this event important): \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

HOW (who is sponsoring or helping out with the event, or how can people get involved):

---

---

---



## Making Sure the Media Listens

- Make sure your event or story is newsworthy (does the public need or want to know about your story?)
- Double check all of the information you send to the media to make sure it is right (especially dates and times of events)
- When providing your contacts with information make sure it is too the point and that you have included all of the important facts
- When speaking with the media make sure you are representing the organization positively
- Always be polite and give the reporter the information they ask for, if you don't know an answer tell them you don't know but that you will get back to them and make sure you do get back to them
- Remember to always thank the reporter for taking an interest in your story
- Follow up with your contacts to make sure they received the information and check to see if they require anything else from you.



## Advice from your fellow Ambassadors

**Troy says:** Speak clearly when you are talking to the media!

**Stephanie says:** After talking to the media ask them to tell you what they learned from you and make sure they have the right facts!

**Theresa says:** Smile and make sure you look good!



## Tips for Success

- 😊 Be yourself
- 😊 Relax
- 😊 Speak clearly and slowly
- 😊 Concentrate on your key message
- 😊 Think before you answer a questions
- 😊 Wear clean cloths and brush your hair
- 😊 Bring your medals and talk about how you won them
- 😊 Bring pictures or props that will help you remember what you want to talk about
- 😊 Practice, Practice, Practice!



## Advice from your fellow Ambassadors

**Troy says:** Be a great athlete and speak to the best of your ability, speak up, don't be afraid to be heard!

**Stephanie says:** Be brave, and let your real personality shine through!

**Theresa says:** Don't be scared, people are there to listen to what you are saying to them. They won't laugh at you!

**Kim says:** Engage the media with something that they don't know about!

**Jon says:** Be a good listener, people will feel comfortable approaching you!



# Appendix A

## Sample Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

April 4, 2008

### **Durham Region set to play host to 700 Special Olympics athletes during the Spring Provincial Games**

**OSHAWA, Ontario**– Police Services in Durham Region are getting ready to host the Special Olympics Ontario Spring Provincial Games (WHAT), May 28th to June 1st, 2008 (WHEN). The Special Olympics athletes (WHO) will be housed at Durham College/UOIT (WHERE) and they will be participating in the four spring sports: Basketball, Swimming, Bowling and Powerlifting. Athletes have been training and participating in qualifying events over the last year in hopes that they would be able to represent their home communities and regions at these games. (HOW & WHY)



## **Appendix B**

# **Language Guidelines**

Words matter because people matter and people bring meaning to words. What we say and the language we use matters.

Person first terminology demonstrates respect for the individual first. Positive words promote positive images, just like negative words create negative images. The following language guidelines have been developed for use by anyone writing or speaking about persons with disabilities, to ensure that all people are portrayed with individuality and dignity.

### **THE DO's**

Intellectual disability is an adjective, and is just one of many that might be used to describe someone.

**EMPHASIZE THE PERSON, NOT THE DISABILITY.**



DO use the preferred language:

A person with an intellectual disability;

Individuals, persons, or people with intellectual disabilities;

John Public, who has an intellectual disability;

Families of persons with intellectual disabilities.

REMEMBER TO ALWAYS USE PERSON FIRST TERMINOLOGY.

DO distinguish between adults and children with an intellectual disability. Use adults or children, or older or younger athletes.

DO refer to participants in Special Olympics as athletes. In no case should the word ever appear in quotations marks.



When writing or when speaking about a person, DO refer to persons with disabilities in the same style as persons without them; full name on first reference and last name on subsequent references. Avoid the use of childlike terms or nicknames unless you have received permission by the individual to do so.

DO use the following correct terminology:

A person has an intellectual disability, rather than is suffering from, afflicted with, or a victim of intellectual retardation

A person has Down Syndrome (Note the correct and singular term 'Down Syndrome' instead of 'Down's Syndrome'). Never use the term "Down's" or "mongloid" or "mongloidism"

A person has a learning disability, and is not a learning disabled person

A person may use a wheelchair, rather than is confined or restricted to a wheelchair



A person has a physical disability, and is not a physically challenged person

A person is visually impaired or blind, rather than a sight impaired person

A person is hearing impaired or deaf, rather than a hearing impaired or deaf person. (The term deaf mute is used when an individual is deaf and does not speak verbally)

A person has a seizure disorder or epilepsy, rather than is an epileptic; a person has a seizure rather than a fit.

DO use the correct term when describing Special Olympics Ontario and the use of the acronym SOO versus the past use of “Ontario Special Olympics” (OSO).

DO describe communities as Special Olympics Ontario – community-xxx, versus as described in the past as xxx-community Special Olympics.



## Appendix B

# Language Guidelines

### THE DO NOT's

DO NOT PREFACE Special Olympics with the word “the”. This implies that Special Olympics is a one-time, singular event, or only “the Games” when in fact it is a year-round program of sport training and competition. In writing and speaking, one should simply say, for example: “support Special Olympics Ontario Provincial Games” – not “Support the Special Olympics Ontario Provincial Games”.

DO NOT use the word “kids” when referring to Special Olympics athletes; always use the word athlete. Adult athletes are an integral part of the program.

DO NOT use the adjective “unfortunate” when talking about persons with an intellectual disability.



DO NOT sensationalize the accomplishments of people with an intellectual disability as heroic or brave. While these accomplishments should be recognized and applauded, disability rights advocates and encourages all individuals to avoid referring to achievements in ways which reinforce and perpetuate the stigma of disability. If you have any thoughts or questions on these guidelines, please contact your local District Developer or any staff member at the Provincial Office.

NOTE: The proper use of Special Olympics always involves the inclusion of Olympics in its plural form. When using the name of the organization to address an athlete, volunteer or event, Special Olympics should always be used in a plural format.



## Appendix C

# Athletes Rights and Responsibilities

1. I have the **RIGHT** to belong to Special Olympics Ontario (SOO). It is my **RESPONSIBILITY** to uphold its Oath & be dedicated to my sport & my team.
2. I have the **RIGHT** to be treated fairly & equally. It is my **RESPONSIBILITY** to know the rules, follow the rules & accept the consequences of ALL my actions.
3. I have the **RIGHT** to speak & be heard. It is my **RESPONSIBILITY** to communicate with others respectfully, & not to use any foul language or unkind words, or unkind gestures.
4. I have the **RIGHT** to a qualified & dedicated coach who will respect my rights as an athlete. It is my **RESPONSIBILITY** to work together with my coach, & respect his or her rights as a coach.



5. I have the **RIGHT** to enjoy my sport in a safe place & in a safe way. It is my **RESPONSIBILITY** to tell my coach, or another person I trust, if I feel unsafe.
  
6. I have the **RIGHT** to be united in sportsmanship & fair play. It is my **RESPONSIBILITY** to treat others fairly, encourage sportsmanship & fair play.
  
7. I have the **RIGHT** to bring to events my personal items & my sports equipment. It is my **RESPONSIBILITY** to look after my sports equipment & report any theft or damage of my sports equipment to someone I trust. I will not take another person's property.
  
8. I have the **RIGHT** to be respected on & off the field, or wherever I play my sport. It is my **RESPONSIBILITY** to respect others on & off the field.



9. I have the **RIGHT** to be the best I can be & to receive recognition for my successes. It is my **RESPONSIBILITY** to encourage & support others to do their best.
10. I have the **RIGHT** to win, & if I cannot win, be brave in the attempt. It is my **RESPONSIBILITY** to have fun & participate in the sport of my choice in a safe & positive way.



## Appendix D

# Special Olympics History

### **Special Olympics International:**

Special Olympics currently serves more than 1.7 million persons with intellectual disabilities in more than 200 Programs in more than 150 countries. In 2000, Special Olympics made a bold commitment to reach 2 million athletes by the end of 2005, placing a renewed focus on building the movement's infrastructure and establishing tools to facilitate growth. An initial census of athlete participation conducted in that year established a baseline count of athletes worldwide.



## **Special Olympics Ontario:**

Special Olympics Ontario is a community-based program. Its primary instrument of program delivery is the local sport clubs, which gives athletes the opportunity to train and compete twelve months of the year. Invitational and Regional meets occur frequently, and athletes advance through a regular cycle of Provincial Games to compete in both National and World Games and Championships. Provincial competitions are held in the Spring, Summer and Winter every two years. National Summer and Winter Competitions are conducted every four years as are World Winter and Summer competitions. This competition cycle ensures that every year, Canadian athletes have an opportunity to compete in either a provincial, national or international event.



## The Birth of Special Olympics in Canada

In the early sixties, testing of children with intellectual disabilities revealed that they were only half as physically fit as their non-disabled peers. It was assumed that their low fitness levels were a direct result of mental retardation. A Toronto researcher and professor, **Dr. Frank Hayden**, questioned this assumption. Working with a control group of children on an intense fitness program, he demonstrated that, given the opportunity, intellectually disabled people could become physically fit and acquire the physical skills necessary to participate in sport. His research proved that low levels of fitness and lack of motor skills development in people with mental handicaps were a result of nothing more than a sedentary life style. In other words, their intellectual disabilities resulted in their exclusion from the kinds of physical activity and sports experience readily available to other children.



Inspired by his discoveries, Dr. Hayden began searching for ways to develop a national sports program for intellectually disabled people. It was a goal he eventually achieved, albeit not in Canada. His work came to the attention of **Eunice Kennedy Shriver** and the Kennedy Foundation in Washington, D.C., and led to the creation of Special Olympics. The first sports competitions organized under the Special Olympics banner were held at Soldier's Field in Chicago in 1968.



**Dr. Frank Hayden**



## **Appendix E**

### **District Developers List**

Provincial Office: 1-888-333-5515

<b>Kaitlyn Lindensmith</b>	South Western Ontario	ext. 275
<b>Pratima Bhatt</b>	South Central Ontario	ext. 272
<b>Hellaina Rothenburg</b>	Central Ontario	ext. 276
<b>Jarrod Copland</b>	Northern Ontario	ext. 274
<b>Michael Chung</b>	Greater Toronto Area	ext. 256
<b>Karla Williams</b>	Greater Toronto Area	ext. 255
<b>Stacey McKeown</b>	Eastern Ontario	ext. 278



