



Special Olympics

Healthy Athletes

Update

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Special Olympics is a nonprofit international program of year-round sports, training and athletic competition for children and adults with mental retardation.

Welcome to the first *Special Olympics Healthy Athletes* newsletter. The purpose of this newsletter is to provide the reader with information about the *Healthy Athletes* initiative. As stated by Special Olympics Founder and Honorary Chairman Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Special Olympics athletes cannot participate successfully in their sport unless they are in good health. The *Healthy Athletes* initiative was formalized in 1996 with the mission to improve, through better health and fitness, each athlete's ability to train and compete. In order to reach this goal, programs involving dentistry, optometry, audiology, health promotion and physical therapy have come together in an effort to provide services at Special Olympics events. The *Healthy Athletes* initiative goes beyond just providing direct services at Special Olympics events; it also provides additional training for health care professionals and students about the special needs of patients with mental retardation, along with collecting data to show the prevalence of health problems in people with mental retardation. The presence of *Healthy Athletes* venues also serves to educate the public and policy makers about the special health care needs of Special Olympics athletes.

This first issue will highlight some of the individual programs that make up *Healthy Athletes*. In future issues we will highlight stories of athletes whose lives have been touched by the initiative. If you know of an athlete whose life has been positively impacted by participating in one of the *Healthy Athletes* screenings, please forward the information and photo (if available) to: Dr. Sandra Block, Editor, *Special Olympics Healthy Athletes* newsletter (sblock@eyecare.ico.edu). We would also like this publication to be a mechanism for the clinical directors from the various screenings to share information about their events. If you have something that worked well and would like to share it with other clinical directors, please forward the information to Dr. Block.

We hope you find the newsletter informative, interesting and helpful to continuing the success of your program. We look forward to your feedback on how this newsletter can meet your needs. ■

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Surgeon General David Satcher Convenes Conference on Health Disparities and Mental Retardation

Healthy People 2010 is a set of health objectives for the United States to achieve over the first decade of the new century. One of its primary objectives is to eliminate health disparities among different segments of the population. U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher, M.D., Ph.D., conducted a two-day



U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher presents the "Medallion Award" to Special Olympics Founder Eunice Kennedy Shriver.

The Special Olympics University Washington D.C. Team



From top left to bottom right: David Evangelista, Kyra Sherman, Kester Edwards, Dr. Mark Wagner, Dr. Stephen Corbin, Shantae Polk, Courtney Pastorfield, and Renee Dease

conference in December 2001 to address health disparities for people with mental retardation. Areas discussed included problematic issues of attitudes, quality, access, cost and continuity of health care services for people with mental retardation. Health care professionals hammered out a framework for action that will enhance lifelong primary and specialty care. The impetus for the conference came at the 2001 Special Olympics World Winter Games in March, when a Special Olympics report on *The Health Status and Needs of Individuals with Mental Retardation* was presented at a U.S. Senate Committee Hearing attended by the Surgeon General in Anchorage, Alaska. Dr. Satcher presented four preliminary findings that were identified as health care issues that need to be addressed and improved for people with mental retardation:

- Increasing access to quality care
- Improving health care provider education and training
- Taking a comprehensive approach to delivering care across the lifespan of people with mental retardation
- Reducing stigma and increasing public awareness

Dr. Satcher stated that shortcomings in the U.S. health system severely impact people with mental retardation and that developing a framework will allow the Surgeon General's office to move forward, take action and face the challenges ahead. He called upon health care professionals, policymakers, program planners and the public to help make this vision a reality.

Special Olympics athlete and spokesperson Loretta Claiborne eloquently lamented her frustration in accessing the health care system and called on the people who attended the conference to be "the movers and shakers" of health care in the future for all people with mental retardation.

During the conference, Dr. Satcher presented the prized Surgeon General's "Medallion Award"—his highest honor—to Eunice Kennedy Shriver, founder of Special Olympics, for her efforts as a leader in the worldwide struggle to improve and enhance the lives of individuals with mental retardation. Shriver shared the award with her son, Timothy P. Shriver, President and CEO of Special Olympics. ■



Special Olympics

Healthy Athletes

Special Smiles



The Special Olympics Special Smiles dental screening, education and referral program helps increase access to dental care for Special Olympics athletes and all people with mental retardation.

Special Olympics Special Smiles

Special Olympics Special Smiles has had its most successful year ever in 2001, thanks to each of our local coordinators, data coordinators, sponsors and friends! The first-ever "Surgeon General's Conference on Health Disparities and Mental Retardation," which was held in December 2001, focused on lack of access to dental care and the importance of oral health as an integral part of total health. Dr. Satcher promised a quality report to help our efforts in attempting to change policy.

The number of *Special Smiles* events has increased and each one was a winner. In addition, two Train-the-Trainer events took place this past year, one at the 2001 Special Olympics World Winter Games and one in Cardiff, Wales. The University of Maryland took over from Boston University as our center for data analysis and collecting—we cannot thank Boston University enough

for its prior leadership in this area since the program's inception, but it was time to make a change.

This year *Special Smiles* moved over to the fulfillment house for central supply, with the work being done by a sheltered workshop composed of individuals with significant disabilities.

The Academy of General Dentistry has approved a formal affiliation with *Special Smiles* and has become the organization that offers continuing education credits for the initiative.

Great Happenings at the 2001 Special Olympics World Winter Games

- More than 1,500 mouth guards fabricated by Sultan Chemists. The mouth guard component also can be implemented at the local level.
- State Farm Insurance donated 50 laptop computers that were used for direct entry by *Healthy Athletes* programs.

- Sonicare by Philips provided each athlete with an automatic toothbrush.

This past June, *Special Smiles* presented at the first World Congress on Dental Traumatology and Sports Dentistry in Boston, where an agreement was formed. Members of the Academy, when possible, will assume leadership for our mouth guard program, down to the local level. At the Boston event, *Special Smiles* had **Boston Bruin's goalie Byron Dafeo** spend time with the athletes.

Our partnership with Children's Television Workshop has completed its first year. As a result of our efforts, the introduction to *Sesame Street* has been "reshot" to include footage of children with mental retardation, and people with disabilities will be more visible on the show to reinforce the concept for children that they can "be the same but different."

Exceptional Parent magazine is publishing a 16-part series on oral health for people with disabilities. Each issue of the magazine will have an article related to this topic and many of our clinical directors are authors. The magazine is a great forum for us and is providing us with great visibility.

This was the first year of The Grotto

Foundation's support with their initial contribution of US\$50,000.

Special Smiles' Web site (www.specialsmiles.org) is up and running. Dentalxchange.com has provided us with this contribution. In addition to the database of providers, they are adding our manuals to the site in order to facilitate global expansion by providing an avenue for Web-based learning.

Dr. Barry Waldman has recently published articles related to lack of education of dental professionals, issues of reimbursement and problems in access to care. *Special Smiles* is working on the Council on Dental Education to have mandatory training for dental students in treating people with disabilities.

Currently there are no reports in the literature on the incidence of oral cancer or lesions in people with mental retardation. A packet of information is being put together for our volunteers this year in collaboration with The National Oral Health Information Clearinghouse. It will include literature about Special Olympics as well as, oral health problems of people with disabilities. Other future plans include another Train-the-Trainer seminar scheduled for February in California.

In April, *Special Smiles* will have the opportunity to address the Chief Dental

Officers of Europe. Nations from the European Union will be represented, as will the following emerging nations:

Malta	Slovakia	Latvia
Hungary	Bulgaria	Russia
Lithuania	Albania	Albania
Slovenia	Belarus	Turkey

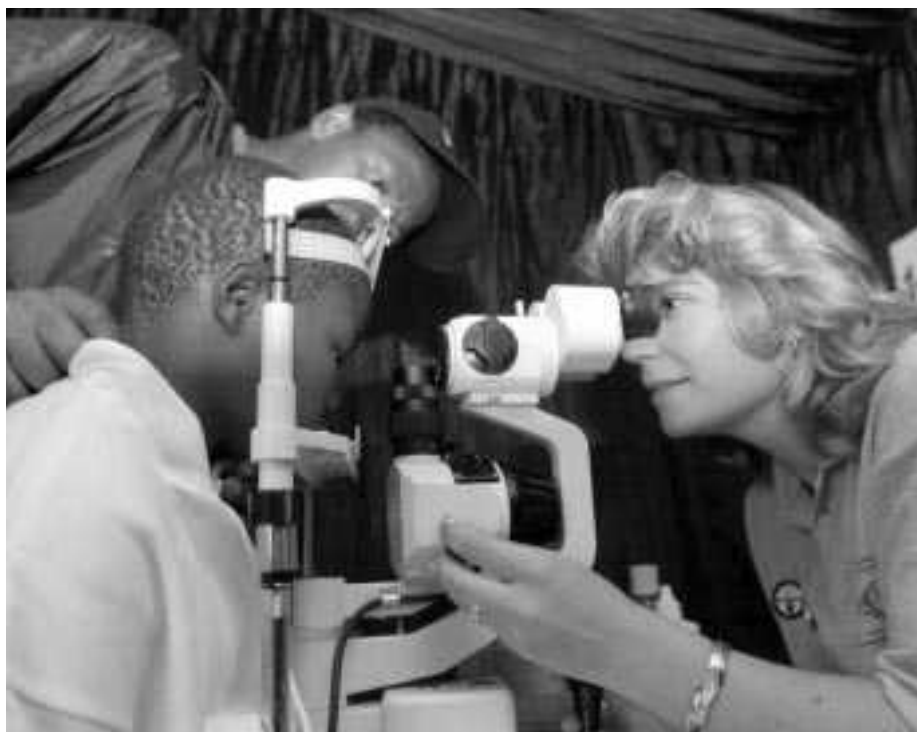
Hopefully these countries will then begin *Special Smiles* programs.

Corporate Sponsors for Special Olympics Special Smiles:

- Colgate Oral Pharmaceuticals
- Eastman Kodak Company ('01)
- Patterson Dental Supply Company
- MediBadge
- Sultan Chemists
- The Grotto Humanitarian Foundation
- Oral Health America
- Philips-Optiva ('01)
- Dentalxchange.com
- Alpha Omega Fraternity
- State Farm Insurance ('01)
- ADA Health Foundation

Our success would not be possible without your support. What a team we have, and we have only just begun! ■

Special Olympics-Lions Clubs International Opening Eyes Program



In 2001, 36 Special Olympics-Lions Clubs International Opening Eyes events took place around the world.



Special Olympics



Lions Clubs International



Special Olympics-Lions Clubs International Opening Eyes began at the 1991 Special Olympics World Summer Games as an American Optometric Association Sports Vision Section screening. At that time, optometrists volunteered to offer the athletes a sports vision screening. Dr. Paul Berman, one of the organizers in 1991, was concerned that many of the athletes screened needed glasses and no mechanism existed to ensure that they received the appropriate follow-up care. As a result of his frustration, Dr. Berman

took action. He enlisted the help of other association members to make significant changes for the next event.

At the 1995 Special Olympics World Summer Games, the vision program was completely revamped. Two changes took place. First, the screening techniques were modified, and second, new eyewear was offered to athletes. The tests currently used at *Opening Eyes* events have been carefully chosen. Each test provides reliable information about the athlete's vision and testing can be completed by more than 98 percent of the athletes, regardless of language skills or cognitive level. Areas tested include vision history, visual acuity (far and near), color vision, depth perception, eye posture, eye health (external and internal), and presence and amount of refractive errors (nearsightedness, farsightedness, astigmatism). At the end of the basic screening, the data collected is reviewed to identify if the athlete needs additional care or may benefit from new glasses. If it looks as if the athlete may need a new correction, one of the volunteer optometrists is enlisted to deter-

mine an appropriate prescription. Once the final prescription is written, the athlete chooses a new frame from a selection provided by two frame manufacturers, Luxotica or Liberty. In addition, *Opening Eyes* advocates that athletes who participate in sports where protective eyewear is recommended, such as basketball, should be wearing appropriate athletic eyewear. These are provided in appropriate cases.

All of the *Opening Eyes* services are provided at no cost to the athlete. The program is made possible through the generosity of many, including **Lions Clubs International** (www.lionsclubs.org) who has provided a three-year grant in the amount of US\$3.28 million. In addition, corporate sponsors include **Lombart Instrument, Essilor, Luxotica, Liberty, Precision Vision** and **Stereo Optical**. Lastly, the programs would not be possible without the thousands of volunteer hours given by those who work at each event.

Opening Eyes just completed the first year in which Special Olympics and Lions Clubs International partnered on

the effort. During 2001, 36 *Opening Eyes* events took place, ranging from the 2001 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Anchorage, to 26 events that took place at the state level, to nine *Opening Eyes* events that occurred outside the United States. More than 9,200 Special Olympics athletes went through the vision screening program this year and more than 3,000 pairs of glasses were provided to the athletes. But these numbers only tell part of the story. The success of the program can also be seen through the fact that more than 600 optometrists, 350 optometry students and more than 400 Lions volunteered their time to make the *Opening Eyes* vision program a success.

Opening Eyes is looking forward to growth in 2002. Two Train-the-Trainer programs designed to provide new clinical directors with the needed skills to create a *Opening Eyes* event took place in 2001, and two are planned for 2002. We look to these newly trained clinical directors as resources to take *Opening Eyes* to new locations. ■

Special Olympics Healthy Hearing Sounds Off!

Special Olympics Healthy Hearing began providing screening services for athletes at the 1999 Special Olympics World Summer Games in North Carolina. Its purpose remains twofold:

- to screen the hearing of athletes and notify them and their coaches if follow-up care is needed
- to study the prevalence of hearing loss in athletes competing in Special Olympics events.

Screening of hearing is accomplished by testing a person's hearing for pure tones within a prescribed test frequency range, usually 1000 through 4000 Hz. An intensity level is set above the normal hearing threshold of 0 dB hearing level, and each frequency is tested at that level. Usually 25 dB is selected for the screening level.

Athletes are directed through two registration/checkout desks and four screening stations. Many athletes require only the first two stations. This includes examining the ear canals for cerumen (earwax) and an otoacoustic (OAE) hearing screening of both ears. If athletes pass the OAE station, they exit the screening area. This takes about seven minutes. If they do not pass, they are checked again using tympanometry (middle ear) and pure tone screening. This may take another eight minutes. The athlete receives a copy of the report form, which includes follow-up recommendations.

Healthy Hearing also can make custom-fitted swim plugs on site for those athletes needing or wishing to have them. Athletes who wear hearing aids also may receive cleaning and minor maintenance of their aids.

Healthy Hearing programs have been conducted at several National and State Games over the last three years. Preliminary outcomes on prevalence of hearing loss in athletes are now available. At each event, several athletes who were identified with hearing loss had follow-up diagnostic tests by volunteer audiologists and were thus fitted with new donated hearing aids at their Games. ■



Special Olympics

Healthy Athletes

Healthy Hearing



With the help of volunteer health care professionals, Special Olympics Healthy Hearing screenings help identify Special Olympics athletes with hearing loss and, if necessary, provide them with donated hearing aids.

Special Olympics Health Promotion

Special Olympics introduced the newest component of *Special Olympics Healthy Athletes* at the 2001 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Anchorage, Alaska. The *Special Olympics Health Promotion* event debuted using interactive educational tools and motivational information to encourage athletes to improve their nutrition, keep physically active and modify lifestyles to lower disease risk.

Why Promote Health?

There has been increasing awareness that people with mental retardation more often have medical problems, such as heart disease, obesity and diabetes. These conditions, moreover, tend to develop at earlier ages and, to make it worse, people with mental retardation usually have less access to health care. In 2000, Special Olympics commissioned researchers at Yale University to review what is known about the health status of people with mental retardation. What they found (published as *The Health Status and Needs of Individuals with Mental Retardation*) confirmed that people with mental retardation generally have more health problems that lead to premature aging and shorter life expectancies. But there is something that can be done about this, as

researchers found evidence that exercise and diet programs can work to improve performance and lower disease risk among this population. Having mental retardation does not necessarily mean poor health; obesity is by no means inevitable. Obesity rates among Germans with mental retardation, for instance, are far lower than for Americans with mental retardation.

Health Promotion Development

By 2000, several Special Olympics Programs were including health screening and counseling among their *Healthy Athletes* venues. The Special Olympics New Jersey State Games, for example, featured a *Wellness Park* that provided screenings for scoliosis, cardiac conditions and speech pathology. Meanwhile, the findings of *The Health Status and Needs of Individuals with Mental Retardation* indicated that much of the morbidity and mortality among people with mental retardation is tied to their diets and lack of exercise. The decision was therefore made to add a *Health Promotion* component to the *Healthy Athletes* initiative.

At the *Special Olympics Health Promotion* event in Anchorage, athletes received information about diet and the importance of physical fitness, tobacco cessation and sun-skin safety. More than 700 athletes attended the venue and had

their body mass indices (BMIs) and blood pressures measured. The Anchorage *Healthy Athletes* event also showed how effective nursing faculty/students and registered dietitians can be as volunteers in such venues. The importance of modifying diet, increasing exercise and adopting disease prevention behaviors was further underscored at a U.S. Senate Field Hearing, chaired by Alaska Senator Ted Stevens, at which the findings of *The Health Status and Needs of Individuals with Mental Retardation* were formally presented.

Later in 2001, the *Health Promotion* content was modified to meet the needs of athletes in developing countries. A flexible spectrum of *Health Promotion* services, *Global Health Promotion*, was designed to respond to feedback from health professionals in Africa. They emphasized the importance of promoting personal safety, hygiene and avoiding communicable disease.

Health Promotion events for 2002 will be held at the Special Olympics Southern California Floor Hockey Games, Special Olympics Arizona State Games, Special Olympics North Carolina State Games, Special Olympics Delaware State Games and at Special Olympics New Jersey's *Wellness Park*, as well as at each of the *SO Fit For Sports* sites. For more information about *Health Promotion*, contact Courtney Pastorfield at (202) 824-0269. ■



Special Olympics

Healthy Athletes
Health Promotion



Health Promotion, the newest Healthy Athletes discipline, encourages Special Olympics athletes to improve their nutrition, keep physically active and modify their lifestyles to lower disease risk.

Physical therapists are involved in the promotion of health, wellness and fitness. Physical therapists understand that physical fitness is key to successful performance of daily, work and leisure activities, and that all individuals should have the opportunity to understand and pursue physical fitness.

The established professional relationship between Special Olympics and the American Physical Therapy Association created an opportunity for APTA and Special Olympics North Carolina to develop a flexibility screening for athletes participating in the 1999 Special Olympics World Summer Games. In November 1999, APTA agreed to develop *FUNfitness*, a comprehensive physical therapy component for the *Special Olympics Healthy Athletes* initiative.

FUNfitness was developed and pilot tested in 2000, and premiered with the assistance of the Alaska Physical Therapy Association at the 2001 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Anchorage, Alaska.

FUNfitness is a fitness screening event designed to assess and improve flexibility, functional strength and balance; to educate participants, families and coaches about the importance of flexibility, strength and balance; and to provide a hands-on opportunity for athletes to learn about physical therapists.

The physical therapist assesses flexibility of the hamstring, calf, shoulder rotator and hip flexor muscles; functional strength of the abdominal and lower extremity muscles; and balance (single leg stance and

functional reach).

The screening also provides instruction to athletes about how to stretch, strengthen and improve balance. Physical therapist assistants and physical therapist or physical therapist assistant students work during the screening under the direction and supervision of the physical therapist.

The decision to host *FUNfitness* at a Special Olympics event as part of the *Healthy Athletes* initiative should be made jointly by the Special Olympics Program Director and the President of the APTA State Chapter. Contact information for APTA chapter presidents can be found at www.apta.org/components/component_profiles.

Contact Donna Bernhardt Bainbridge, PT, EdD, ATC, for additional information about *FUNfitness* at (800) 999-2782, ext. 3170, or donnabainbridge@apta.org. ■



Special Olympics FUNfitness, introduced at the 2001 Special Olympics World Winter Games, is a fitness screening event that teaches athletes how to stretch, strengthen and improve balance.



FUNfitness provides a hands-on opportunity for Special Olympics athletes to learn about physical therapists.



Special Olympics

Healthy Athletes
FUNfitness

2003 Special Olympics World Summer Games

The 2003 Special Olympics World Summer Games will be held in Dublin, Ireland. Scheduled for the first time outside the United States, the Games will be the largest sporting event in the world that year. More than 7,000 athletes from 160 countries, together with 3,000 coaches and official delegates and 28,000 families and friends, are expected to attend.

The mission of the 2003 Special Olympics World Summer Games: *"To provide in Ireland a unique and unparalleled sporting and cultural experience for the athletes taking part, from Europe and all over the world, as well as for their coaches, families, volunteers and sponsors, combining the excitement of sport with the opportunity for personal distinction and pride."*

Taking place from 20-29 June 2003, the World Games will be centered around the Greater Dublin area. However, the entire island of Ireland will have an opportunity to play an integral part in the event.

A feature of these World Games will be a Host Town Program where local communities from 16-20 June 2003 will host all the participating teams. Each team will have an opportunity to relax, acclimatize and train before moving to their World Games accommodations on 20 June 2003.

The sports offered at the 2003 Special Olympics World Summer Games will be:

- Athletics
- Aquatics
- Badminton
- Basketball
- Bocce
- Bowling
- Cycling
- Equestrian
- Football
- Golf
- Gymnastics
- Powerlifting
- Rollerskating
- Sailing
- Table Tennis
- Team Handball
- Tennis
- Volleyball

The *Special Olympics Healthy Athletes* initiative at the 2003 Special Olympics World Summer Games will be comprised of six disciplines: Optometry, Audiology, Dentistry, Physiotherapy, Health Promotion and Podiatry. The venue for the *Healthy Athletes* programs will be the Royal Dublin Society. This

multifunctional venue will be the location for four sports (Gymnastics, Bocce, Powerlifting and Table Tennis), the Motor Activities Training Program, the *Healthy Athletes* initiative and the Olympic Town and Festival.

The RDS will also be the main center for families, media and guests. Therefore the RDS will be a hub of activity during the World Games. The *Healthy Athletes* initiative will run from 21 June to 29 June 2003, and will be preceded by a Train-the-Trainer session.

A Scientific Symposium, including health, will take place 19-20 June in Belfast, N. Ireland. ■



Special Olympics

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