

“Young Athletes not only helped our son prepare physically for Special Olympics, but he enjoyed participating in the program because of all the wonderful people he met. He especially enjoyed playing at home with his family and friends. Young Athletes also gave us great insight into the world of Special Olympics. Young Athletes has been an excellent stepping-stone in getting our son and family started. We look forward to many years of participating in Special Olympics.”

- Donna Arechavala  
mother of Michael (7 years old)



**Special Olympics**  
Michigan  
**youngathletes™**

The mission of Special Olympics Michigan is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities.

Athletes are given continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy, and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

For more information

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Created by the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation  
Authorized and Accredited by Special Olympics, Inc. for  
the Benefit of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities



**Be a Fan of Tomorrow.  
Join Young Athletes.**





Young Athletes is an innovative sports play program for children with intellectual disabilities, designed to introduce them to the world of sports prior to Special Olympics eligibility at age eight.

Since its inception in 1968, Special Olympics has established itself as a preeminent global organization offering sport training and competition opportunities to people with intellectual disabilities age eight and above. Over the years, families of children too young to compete looked for avenues to join the movement.

Thanks to the generous support of the Mattel Children's foundation, Gang Family foundation and Lynch Family Foundation, Special Olympics can now welcome these future athletes and families through Young Athletes™ -- a developmental appropriate play program for children with intellectual disabilities ages two through seven.

“ My excitement was going to the big track meet. Seeing all those children having a good time, excitedly showing the parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and whoever was there all the new skills they learned and what they were able to do.”

- Colleen Bailey  
Parent of Triplets in Young Athletes

Young Athletes introduces children with intellectual disabilities, their peers and families to the world of Special Olympics by pursuing the following goals:

- Engage children with intellectual disabilities through developmentally appropriate play activities designed to foster physical, cognitive and social development;
- Welcome family members of children with intellectual disabilities to the Special Olympics network of support;
- Raise awareness about the abilities of children with intellectual disabilities through inclusive peer participation, demonstrations and other events.

Young Athletes is a versatile program that can work in various learning situations. The program is designed for families to play with their young athletes at home in a fun atmosphere. It is also appropriate for preschools, schools and playgroups to use with small groups of young children with and without disabilities. The flexibility of Young Athletes ensures the opportunity to welcome families and their young children into the Special Olympics family.

Developing Skills for Success as a Future Special Olympics Athlete

- Foundational skills
- Walking and running
- Balancing and jumping
- Trapping and catching
- Throwing
- Striking
- Kicking
- Advanced skills

The Young Athletes program includes several resources to guide family members, educators and other professionals as they conduct Young Athletes activities with their children, brothers, sisters, cousins, grandchildren, students or patients.

- Young Athletes Activities Guide - descriptions of the official Young Athletes activities;
- Training DVD - instructional video of children performing the Young Athletes activities;
- Young Athletes Equipment Kit.
- For more resources, materials and information, visit [www. specialolympics.org/ youngathletes](http://www.specialolympics.org/youngathletes).