2020-2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Special Olympics Saskatchewan

www.specialolympics.ca/saskatchewan

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2021-2022 Board of Directors

Special Olympics Saskatchewan

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Mission

Special Olympics Saskatchewan is dedicated to enriching the lives of individuals with an intellectual disability through sport

Vision

Our vision is that sport will open hearts and minds towards people with intellectual disabilities and create inclusive communities all over the world

Values

Inclusion: We foster inclusive communities
Diversity: We honour what is unique in each individual
Empowerment: We give everyone the opportunity to persue their full potential
Respect: We operate in an environment of cooperation, collaboration and dignity
Excellence: We elevate performation and standards

Communities and Districts

South East Connection
Estevan
Weyburn

Regina Sport
Regina

South West
Moose Jaw
Swift Current

Parkland Valley
Yorkton & District

Prairie Central
Humboldt & District

Rivers West
Battlefords & District
Kindersley & District
Meadow Lake
Unity & District

Lakeland
Melfort
Nipawin
Prince Albert

Saskatoon Sport
Saskatoon

Northern
La Ronge & District

Knights of Columbus State Deputy Joe Riffel offering the annual state donation to CEO Faye Matt.

Address from the CEO Faye Matt

I don't think we will ever forget the past year at Special Olympics because the lack of sports truly showed us how important it is in our lives.

I'm not afraid to admit how truly heartbreaking it was to pause so many of our events, practices, training sessions and competitions. However, in Special Olympics, I find that heartbreak doesn't last long. I had many calls and messages with athletes and coaches across the province that were full of hope and focused on finding the good in the situation: keeping safe, trying new things, testing our resilience. It is Special Olympics in fact that prepares us for life's unexpected moments and challenges. In sport we win and lose, fail and try again, succeed and still don't stop, and that is very much what facing a global crisis requires.

Without fail, I have so many reasons to be proud of our athletes and volunteers and feel inspired to share that with everyone I meet.

Heading into another program year, our team is ready. We could not be ready without the profound support of our sponsorship partners, our many donors, and government contributions. Despite our inability to offer our traditional programs, our partners showed great faith and support in continuing our relationships so that we could help athletes connect and train at home and prepare for what is to come. I am so proud to be part of an organization that is powered by community.

And so I call upon our partners, volunteers, and athletes to join us as we move forward with everything we've endured and learned. Let's make a game plan together because we are ready to get off the bench and back into the game!

Faye Matt

Online Auction

Going once! Going twice! This past year we held our first-ever Online Auction! It ran from November 16th to 29th on the Facebook Page titled "Special Olympics Saskatchewan Online Auction". We had some great prize items from a variety of donors. Home Hardware donated a starter tool kit and gift cards. Provincial sponsor, Wolseley, donated a beautiful Mineral Globe. There was even a round of golf with Special Olympics athlete Taylor Carter at the Deer Valley golf course. Along with all the other wonderful prizes, we were able to raise $2,300 for Special Olympics Saskatchewan.

Law Enforcement Torch Run

Our friends with the Saskatchewan Law Enforcement Torch Run offered two major fundraisers in a revamped format in 2020-2021. The first was the Truck Convoy, which included two separate Convoys, one in Regina and one in Saskatoon. The event was a great success and saw 53 trucks participate. The second event was the Polar Plunge held in a virtual format. RCMP Depot Division led the way raising an amazing total of $10,620 for the cause. Saskatchewan LETR also introduced a new website - www.saskatchewanletr.com. The website highlights upcoming LETR events across the province and ways to get involved.

2021 POLAR PLUNGE

The 2021 LETR Virtual Polar Plunge was a tremendous success! Law Enforcement agencies were joined by supporters of Special Olympics from across the province and raised over $23,000 for Special Olympics Saskatchewan. This year, with safety being top of mind, the traditional Polar Plunge was replaced with a virtual challenge. Participants were challenged to brave the cold and raise funds and awareness in support of the over 1,500 Special Olympics athletes in the province and share their experience on social media. Leading the way were the Depot Polar Plungers, who raised an amazing total of $10,620 for Special Olympics. The top individual fundraiser was Kirk Muyres who raised a total of $1,265. The most creative social post went to the RCMP Frozen Few. Overall, eight teams and forty six individuals took part in the plunge. We are extremely grateful for everyone who participated, donated and supported the Virtual Polar Plunge. The funds raised go toward providing low to no cost year round programming and training opportunities for individuals with an intellectual disability.

2020 TRUCK CONVOY

The 14th annual Truck Convoy for Special Olympics Saskatchewan was held on September 12th, 2020. This time around, one of the longest running annual fundraisers for Special Olympics Saskatchewan took on a new format, with Convoys taking place in both Regina and Saskatoon. The Convoys each completed a loop around the city and were escorted by members of the Law Enforcement Torch Run (LETR) for Special Olympics.

In total, 53 trucks took part in the effort to raise funds and awareness for Special Olympics athletes in the province. We are thankful for the tremendous support we received from the amazing drivers who took part! Also, we would like to send a BIG thank you to the Knights of Columbus and Saskatchewan LETR, who ensured the event ran smoothly. Over $19,000 was raised at the Truck Convoy. The funds go toward supporting year round training and professional development opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities

Athlete Profile
Aaron Higgins

Aaron is a Special Olympics Regina athlete who has a passion for sport and life. Anyone who knows Aaron knows he always has something on the go.

Aaron's passion is powerlifting. He continually works toward improving and has won countless medals and placed in numerous competitions. He competes in many generic and Special Olympics tournaments. Aaron's last competition was attending the 2018 National Summer Games in Nova Scotia. Aaron is one of the leaders on the basketball team, encouraging teammates to achieve team success. Aaron also enjoys competing in athletics and bowling continually trying to improve on past performances.

Aaron is very dedicated to his powerlifting training - maintaining it through the challenges of the pandemic and staying physically fit, doing it on his personal time, getting to and from training with the support of his parents. He always tries his best each and every time he comes to an athletics, basketball or bowling practice. He listens intently to all his coaches trying to improve in all disciplines.

Aaron continually works on improving his technique and being able to increase his lifts. He realizes that improvement only comes by putting in the work, no matter which sport he is playing. He works with his coaches in setting goals and celebrates with them when a new goal is reached.

Aaron always has a smile and has a special skill when it comes to making others smile too. This past Christmas he made “Hot Chocolate Bombs” and personally delivered to door steps. He even had the opportunity to develop it into a small business over the Christmas holidays.

He is a competitor at heart, but to all of the athletes he competes with, or trains with, he is their biggest cheerleader. He is always positive and supportive of all of his competitors and teammates. He is the first one to make sure someone is okay, or to tell them they have done a good job when they are sad. He has a great sense of humor and is the life of the party. He has a way of making everyone feel better. He is a great ambassador for Special Olympics!

Let me win. But if I cannot win,
let me be brave in the attempt.
-Special Olympics athlete oath

Volunteer Profile
Conrad Meili

Conrad Meili is the current Community Manager for Special Olympics Estevan. Over this past year and a half, he has been very instrumental in working to get Special Olympics Estevan programs running safely and effectively despite the many challenges of COVID. He was diligent in communicating with Special Olympics Saskatchewan to ensure all COVID protocols were being followed and the programs were able to run. He worked with various stakeholders in Estevan to ensure everyone was safe and comfortable in participating in programs.

Conrad has been able to recruit new volunteers who are positive and committed to the growth of Special Olympics Estevan programs in the community. He has provided training opportunities as well as has been available to offer support and answer any questions that come up. Conrad has provided support and encouragement to all athletes and volunteers as he was able. This past year he took part in a board development workshop, and a Making Ethical Decisions online course.

Conrad works outside of Special Olympics to improve his professional development by attending virtual events, reading and collaborating with other professionals which has a direct benefit on his personal and professional life as well as his role within Special Olympics Estevan.

2019-2020 Awards

Athlete of the Year
Josh Bailey
Greg Donaldson

Team of the Year
Humboldt Broncos Floor Hockey

Coach of the Year
Jo-Ann Paxman
Brian Reifferscheid

Volunteer of the Year
Megan Penno

Shining Star Award
Rahimay Priebe

Unsung Hero Award
Shauna Baron

Athlete Dedication Award
Robbie Bomboir

Junior Coach/Volunteer of the Year
Mackenzie Moore

Bob Pedde Memorial Award
Rhonda Penno

Honorary Life Member
Orest Schiller

LETR Outstanding Service Award
Stephen Hug

Community Excellence Award
Special Olympics Unity & District

Unified Sports Spotlight
Bethlehem Catholic High School

Presidents Citation Order of Merit Award
Wheaton Kia

2020 Coaches Symposium

Like most events in 2020 the Coaches Symposium came with a few challenges with the pandemic. However, we were able to quickly adapt and offer the symposium in a virtual setting! Coaches from around the province, and Manitoba, gathered from their kitchen tables and living room couches for a couple weeks packed with learning, networking, and fun. Overall there were 70 coaches in attendance.

The 2020 Coaches Symposium began with two sessions delivered by Bruno Guevremont. Bruno shared wisdom he has acquired from his years in the Canadian Armed Forces, a journey to the north pole, being the Captain for Team Canada at the Invictus Games, and coaching countless athletes and business professionals. His two topics were Coaching Leadership and Team Cohesion. He shared some of the fundamentals of great leadership and how to foster a culture of great leadership. Afterward, he went into detail on how great leaders can produce a successful team.

Shawn Kuster from the Sport Medicine and Science Council of Saskatchewan led two informative sessions on planning training for athletes. The first session was focused on exercise physiology and determining the importance of anaerobic and aerobic training based on the demands of each sport. His second session went into further detail on the importance of and factors to consider when planning anaerobic training.

Over the course of two weeks there were sport specific coach gatherings hosted. During these calls coaches were given the opportunity to connect with other coaches who coach the same sport as them. These calls were great to share and learn new coaching techniques, share and learn COVID-19 practice or program adaptations, and connect with friends.

The final keynote speaker was former Olympic curling silver medalist, Cheryl Bernard. Her session was titled Resilience is a Choice. Leaning on her experiences with creating a very successful business and the challenges of being an international competitive curler. Cheryl's timely message focused on acknowledging that everyone was going through challenges related to the pandemic but had the choice to not let those struggles completely shut them down. The message of choosing resilience in the face of adversity in order to achieve greatness was well heard.

By having fully trained and qualified coaches, Special Olympics Saskatchewan is able to better provide positive experiences for our athletes and volunteers. The Coaches Symposium is one way SOS supports, facilitates, and encourages our coaches to become greater!

Thank you to all the coaches who attended the 2020 Coaches Symposium! Thank you for taking the time to grow your skills and all the time you give for our athletes.

Coaches and volunteers at the 2019 Coaches Symposium

Choose to Include

Special Olympics Unified Sports®

Special Olympics is dedicated to promoting social inclusion through shared sports training and competition experiences. Unified Sports joins people with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team. It was inspired by a simple principle: training together and playing together is a quick path to friendship and understanding.

Young people with intellectual disabilities do not often get to play on their school sports teams. More and more provinces in Canada are adopting the Unified Sports approach that Special Olympics pioneered.

Students should be encouraged and supported to be agents of change, have opportunities to be leaders, and participate in collaborative school activities. Communities can be leaders in the inclusion movement by providing opportunities for their athletes to participate in this non-traditional format.

We just experienced a global pandemic that impacted our athletes, our programs, our schools, our communities and our world. Let's hope that next year will bring back in-person practices and competitions.

Unified Sport opportunities for 2021/22 are: Bocce, BAGGO, Basketball, and Athletics, as well as Special Olympics Saskatchewan Unified Sports Invitational.

Unified Sports Invitational

Special Olympics Saskatchewan Special Olympics Unified Sports®

INVITATIONAL

Unifying athletes worldwide!

Special Olympics Saskatchewan Unified Sports Invitational just completed its inaugural year. Thank you and congratulations to all of the teachers, coaches, families and athletes from around the world who participated! Next year we are adding another sport – soccer. Competition begins in September.

292 athletes, ages 9 to 77, from Australia, Bharat, Canada, Cayman Islands, South Africa, Thailand and the USA participated in a skills competition in Bocce, BAGGO, and/or Basketball between September and May.

The Saskatchewan athletes came from:

- Dr. Martin LeBoldus Catholic High School, Regina – 6 athletes
- E.D. Feehan Catholic High School, Saskatoon – 15 athletes
- Farm in the Dell, Aberdeen – 2 athletes
- Saskatoon – 2 athletes
- Special Olympics Regina – 2 athletes
- Tommy Douglas Collegiate, Saskatoon – 20 athletes
- Traditions Elementary School, Warman – 10 athletes
- Walter Murray Collegiate, Saskatoon – 29 athletes

Community Youth Programs

We just experienced a global pandemic that shut down or severely altered our Youth Programs. If in-person programs are not possible, we offer at-home guides and family activities on our website to offer some ideas to engage our youth at home. Let's hope that next year offers in-person opportunities.

Participation in Special Olympics Youth Programs leads to a greater involvement within the participants' community, increases social opportunities, helps create strong friendships, provides families with an opportunity to be active together, and increases quality of life for those with an intellectual disability. Special Olympics offers child and youth programs designed to help children with an intellectual disability develop basic motor and sport skills through fun and positive movement experiences. We currently have two Special Olympics Youth Programs:

Active Start for athletes ages 2 to 6 is a family-centered program targeting children with intellectual disabilities ages 2 to 6. Through the program, children learn basic motor skills such as walking, running, jumping, and throwing in a fun and safe environment.

Skills developed through the Active Start Program are: physical skill acquisition, physical fitness, social skill development, decision making, knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of physical activity.

FUNdamentals is a continuation of the Active Start Program for athletes aged 7 to 12 (participation in Active Start prior to registering in FUNdamentals is NOT required). This program transitions from basic movement skills to basic sport skills while maintaining an atmosphere of fun and meaningful interaction. This program also promotes specific sport education, proper nutrition, and social inclusion through participation in positive sport experiences.

Skills developed through the FUNdamentals Program are: develops physical literacy skills, improves fundamental motor skills, participate in a structured physical activity, increased understanding of game structure.

Communities are encouraged to implement the Active Start and FUNdamentals Programs as a part of their Special Olympics programming in order to meet the needs of their youth population with an intellectual disability.

If communities are interested in starting up youth programs please contact Chris Hamilton, Special Olympics Saskatchewan's Youth Coordinator, at chamilton@specialolympics.sk.ca.

Active Start

FUNdamentals

School Youth Programs

We currently have 48 schools from 15 school divisions across the province using our school programs with 660 athletes participating! Schools are encouraged to implement Special Olympics School Programs as a part of Phys. Ed. programming in order to meet the needs of their youth population with an intellectual disability.

Special Olympics Active Start and FUNdamentals school programs are the first of their kind in Canada. They provide specific training and educational opportunities for children/youth with a developmental/intellectual disability and their classmates, many of whom do not have any other avenues for structured physical fitness.

The programs are built on the rationale that, when children with a developmental/intellectual disability receive early instruction in basic motor skills and developmentally appropriate play, there is an excellent opportunity for improvement in their physical, social, and cognitive abilities.

These programs provide the necessary tools for teachers to foster their Special Education students' physical literacy goals.

Active Start is designed to allow children aged 2 to 6 to learn basic motor skills such as walking, running, jumping, and throwing.

FUNdamentals is a continuation of the Active Start Program for athletes aged 7 to 12. This program transitions from basic movement skills to basic sport skills.

The programs are available FREE to any classroom that has students with a developmental/intellectual disability that will be taking part in the program.

The programs include:

- Curriculum aligned programming, lessons, and manuals
- Support and education from Special Olympics Saskatchewan
- A specialized equipment kit (when available)

If schools are interested in starting up programs, please contact Chris Hamilton, Special Olympics Saskatchewan's Youth Coordinator, at chamilton@specialolympics.sk.ca.

Active Start

FUNdamentals

Leadership Conference

The 2021 Leadership Conference was held virtually over Zoom from April 22-25. The Conference is typically targeted at operational volunteers who serve the 16 Community Executive Committees that exist in Saskatchewan. This year we opened it up to all the coaches and volunteers in the province, and had 64 total attendees.

The Conference kicked off with a keynote address from Hayley Wickenheiser. Hayley is a Saskatchewan born, 4 time Olympic Gold Medal winner in the sport of ice hockey. Now in her post playing career, Hayley was recently named the Senior Director of Player Development for the Toronto Maple Leafs; as well as officially becoming a Medical Doctor in May of 2021. Her keynote focused on resiliency, adaptability, and teamwork, and was finished off with a Q & A period. Hayley shared some great insight into how she is able to maintain several different roles at once. She also shared some great stories of competing at the Olympics, and what the feeling is like in a pressure packed moment such as an Olympic Gold Medal Game.

Brenda Robinson facilitated a 3 hour session on Volunteer Recruitment and Retention. Brenda talked about different ways communities can recruit volunteers, and get them involved and engaged right off the hop. She spoke about recruiting volunteers of different ages, skill sets, and experiences, and the best ways to go about getting them actively involved in an organization. Having volunteers with different backgrounds and experiences can lead to a well-rounded organization where everyone has a role to play.

One of the biggest benefits of an in-person conference is the social aspect; whether that's seeing old friends, or meeting new people from across the province. For the virtual conference we offered an hour-long social gathering, which featured a few different games of bingo and trivia, and prizes via Tim Hortons gift cards! It was a good opportunity to see everyone, share a few laughs and stories during what has been a difficult time of isolation for many people.

The closing keynote address for the conference was delivered by Darren Lang. Darren's session, titled "Staying up in a COVID World" touched on some tips and tools to overcome the stress and anxiety that has come with the chaos and uncertainty of COVID. One of the highlights was a segment called "Boost a Buddy" where everyone gave positive 'shout-outs' via the chat, on what they most admired or appreciated about someone else who was participating in the session.

Thank you to all the volunteers who attended the 2021 Leadership Conference!

Virtual Social Hours

Due to COVID-19, many of our athletes experienced prolonged isolation, lack of social interaction, and definitely a lack of Special Olympics programming. Due to the nature of some of our athletes' living arrangements, pre-existing health conditions, and other factors, many of our athletes were experiencing seriously prolonged isolation stints - and if you know anything about Special Olympics athletes, they love to socialize and see their friends.

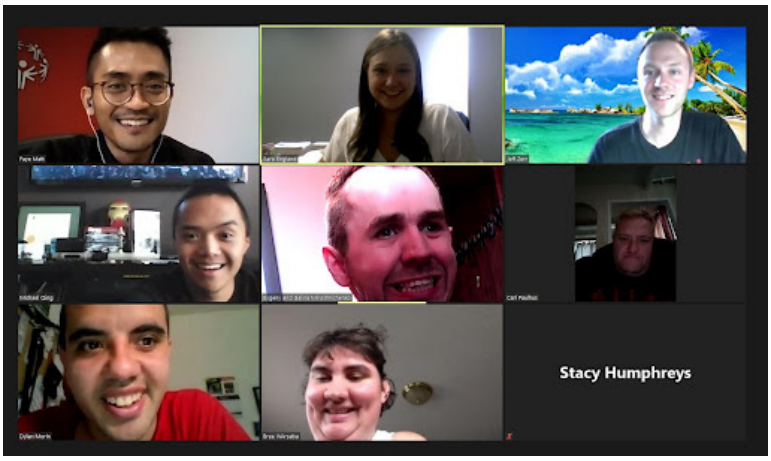
With the idea of connecting our athletes and the help of our friends at Special Olympics Minnesota, the idea to partner with our local Universities was born. We offered two social hours in partnership with the University of Regina. The sessions were well attended by both SOS and UofR athletes. We found that our athletes loved the opportunity to connect with their local sport counterparts and the conversation flowed greatly!

With a pre-planned set of questions, facilitated by a member of the Special Olympics staff, we had a couple great nights of conversations and laughs. It was a great experience for both groups of athletes to connect, share stories, see their friends, and meet some new ones. Many connections were made on topics ranging from pre-game meals to the best outcome of sport participation. One topic where our athletes were able to share plenty of exciting experiences was where they have travelled for sport. Going forward, we hope to offer more Virtual Athlete Meet Ups that involve not only conversation, but virtual games and activities as well.

Thank you to the U of R athletes who joined the sessions and added an exciting evening to our athletes lives! Special Olympics is dedicated to promoting social inclusion through shared sports training and competition experiences. Unified Sports joins people with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team. It was inspired by a simple principle: training together and playing together is a quick path to friendship and understanding.

Athlete Leadership Program

Athlete Leadership Program (ALP) empowers athletes to utilize their voices and abilities to undertake meaningful leadership roles, influence change around perceptions of individuals with an intellectual disability and create more inclusive communities. In a typical year, athletes will attend a weekend workshop with a mentor and take part in one of the following three pillars: Athletes on Committees & Input Councils, Athlete Speaker Training, and Social Media & Media Training. The weekend-long training is meant to provide athletes with the opportunity to build the skills necessary to be advocates for themselves and for Special Olympics in their communities



With the inability to host in person weekend workshops this past year, we utilized technology to continue offering training sessions for Special Olympics athletes across the province. The virtual sessions that were held covered topics such as social media safety and photo and video taking.

Proud to be the Champion of Volunteers

SaskEnergy is proud to sponsor the Special Olympics and their volunteers who share their time, energy and spirit across Saskatchewan.

SaskEnergy

Diversity builds communities.

Coming together with unique perspectives keeps us looking forward. That's why SaskTel sponsors events that encourage diversity.

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sasktel.com/cares.

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FOR SPECIAL OLYMPICS
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