



Annual Report 2015

CELEBRATING 35 YEARS



**Special
Olympics
Alberta**





Mission

Special Olympics Alberta is committed to enriching the lives of Albertans with an intellectual disability through sport.



Vision

Special Olympics Alberta provides individuals with an intellectual disability, of all ages, abilities, opportunity to realize their full athletic potential, with appropriate training, coaching and competitions, to develop life skills, a healthy body and self-esteem.

Special Olympics Alberta is an accredited chapter of Special Olympics Canada.

Special Olympics is more than an event!

Special Olympics delivers world-class sport programs to people with intellectual disabilities of all ages and a wide range of abilities daily in communities across Alberta.

Special Olympics believes that people with intellectual disabilities can, and will, succeed when given the opportunity – we are leveling the playing field.

Special Olympics is a catalyst for social change.

Our programs help:

- Instill confidence, self-esteem and other life skills in our athletes
- Contribute to healthier athletes with life-long physical fitness habits
- Change attitudes and create a more inclusive society
- Strengthen communities





35 Years of Special Olympics in Alberta

Special Olympics is a movement driven to provide sport to people with intellectual disabilities, because we know that it unlocks the full potential of not just athletes, but creates an inclusive society. This belief was not always apparent at the onset of the cause which was only driven through the commitment of grass roots. After Harry "Red" Foster brought the movement of Special Olympics to Canada in 1969, sport education to people with intellectual disabilities was slowly being adopted in communities across Alberta in various ways.

In Red Deer, providing sport activities to people with intellectual disabilities was started by Park Land School, special education classes, and a care facility, Michener Centre, long before Special Olympics was officially incorporated in Alberta. The community created "Special Games for Special People" in the 1970s and took part in a Special Olympics tournament in Winnipeg in 1974 where athletes competed in track and field, swimming and bowling.

"I know parents from the organization of Michener Centre where very supportive," said Jim Young, one of the founders of Special Olympics in Alberta.

"That was the start of integrating the mentally handicapped in the community. Everyone was on board. It was the start of deinstitutionalizing of people. We were proving what they could do, not what they couldn't do."

The movement was also adopted by teachers in Edmonton with Winnifred School pioneering the idea by hosting tournaments in floor hockey and competitions for downhill skiing in 1973 for people with intellectual disabilities.

"Athletes became more accepted as the general public was made aware of their abilities instead of their disabilities," said Louise Suru, past president of Special Olympics Alberta in 1980.

"They became more a part of the community. I believe the greatest impact is that athletes grew in self confidence and social skills, and also realized that they could accomplish higher goals, whether they were sports related, work related, or social interaction or community related."

Special Olympics in Alberta has flourished from these humble beginnings with the spread of Special Olympics in more communities throughout Alberta. Inclusion brought partnerships with sport organizations that provided modified sports and eventually its insertion into provincial games which included athletes with and without disabilities. In 1984, Alberta featured modified cross-country skiing and speed skating in the Alberta Winter Games. In 1986, our province took centre stage for the nation, hosting the Canadian Special Olympics Summer Games in Calgary. 1,019 athletes and coaches from all over Canada were welcomed with a thunderous roar of fans in McMahon Stadium and the bright flame from a torch carried across Canada by 12,000 Canadians.

The growth of Special Olympics is apparent from seeing this number double in the 2014 Special Olympics Canada Summer Games in Vancouver where over 1,200 athletes, 700 coaches and mission staff, and 1,000 volunteers made up the largest summer games in Canada. The National Games also introduced two new official sports of basketball and bocce ball into the competition.

We are entering the dawn of new age for Special Olympics. The possibilities of unified sports in our schools and the engagement of athletes and youth in the leadership of our organization will pave the road for our next generation and a future filled with limitless potential.

Special Olympics Alberta offers sport programs:












Number of Athletes **3092** | Number of Coaches **545** | Total Number of Volunteers (including coaches) **1206**

Special Olympics Alberta is:








Athletes, coaches and volunteers in over 140 communities across Alberta

Affiliate and Community Programs

Summer

-  5-Pin Bowling
-  10-Pin Bowling
-  Athletics
-  Basketball
-  Bocce Ball
-  Golf
-  Powerlifting
-  Rhythmic Gymnastics
-  Soccer
-  Softball
-  Swimming

Winter

-  Alpine Skiing
-  Cross-Country Skiing
-  Curling
-  Figure Skating
-  Floor Hockey
-  Snowshoeing
-  Speed Skating

Airdrie and District
Barrhead
Brooks
Calgary
Camrose
Crowsnest Pass

Drumheller
Edmonton
Edson
Foothills
Grande Prairie
Hinton

Lacombe
Lakeland
Leduc
Lethbridge
Lloydminster
Medicine Hat

Olds and District
Red Deer
Rocky Mountain
House
St. Albert
St. Paul

Strathcona County
Vegreville
West Central
Westlock
Wetaskiwin
Whitecourt



Numbers and Facts from 1980

Alberta Special Olympics was incorporated on February 28, 1980 (Now currently known as Special Olympics Alberta, a change to reflect emphasis of sport instead of geography)



Fun Fact: In 1981, Calgary was offering the following sports: bowling, downhill skiing, swimming, track and field, a 'Learn to Curl' program and drop-in fitness and had a members of 130 athletes. In Edmonton, the Special Olympics sport programs offered were bowling, cross-country skiing, floor hockey, general fitness, swimming, track and field, and speed skating.

Summer



5-Pin Bowling



Athletics



10-Pin Bowling



Swimming

Winter



Downhill Skiing



Floor Hockey



Cross-Country Skiing



Speed Skating

2014-2015 Special Olympics Communities

Six communities running Special Olympics Programs:

Calgary

Olds

Drumheller

Red Deer

Edmonton

Lethbridge





Message from Board of Directors Chair, Bill McLaren

I tell my golfing athletes each week that focus is the key to success and placing that ball in the hole. This same idea can also be said when it comes to ensuring the growth and sustainability of Special Olympics in Alberta. When you set focused priorities in key areas, you see substantial growth and impact.

This past year we placed our focus on sport- investing half our budget towards sport and programs which saw large returns. We experienced 120% increase in the retention of new certified coaches and a growing number of volunteers, coaches and athletes, especially our young athletes who now make up over 28% of our athlete population.

This was a year of many firsts- starting with Grande Prairie hosting their first winter Provincial Games and live streaming of events, hosting our first Athlete Leadership Conference and Alberta pioneering the development of a Unified Sports program in Canada with our partnership with Alberta Schools' Athletics Association.

I also had the pleasure to witness the accomplishments and joy of athletes throughout the year. In July, I cheered on Team Alberta at the 2014 Special Olympics Canada Summer Games in Vancouver which played the host city and welcomed over 1,200 athletes from all the provinces and territories. Later in winter, I took a trip to Grande Prairie to see over 490 athletes from Alberta show their skills in winter sports at the 2015 Special Olympics Alberta Winter Games.

All year round, our athletes, coaches and volunteers are working hard and pushing to be their best. I know that Special Olympics Alberta is driven to ensure it provides quality programs and tools to make this happen and reach out to more people.

We're looking forward to the new ground we're breaking because it will unleash a new generation of champions.

Sincerely,

Bill McLaren



Message from the President and CEO, Johnny Byrne

Thirty five years of Special Olympics in Alberta. That is a lot of memories, medals and milestones. Anniversaries are a great opportunity to celebrate our organizations visionaries and past accomplishments while looking to a future they made possible.

This past year was the perfect example of what we can accomplish together. Team Alberta was made up of 162 members competing in ten sports (including two first time sports) who represented 21 communities. From this team, nine athletes and three volunteers representing six affiliates went on to earn a place on the Team Canada Training Squad that would prepare to compete at the World Games. While on the home front, we held our largest provincial games ever in Grande Prairie and one of the largest Special Olympics Games ever hosted that far north in Canada.

Although those accomplishments are one time events, they represent so much more. They are the culmination of countless hours of preparation by athletes, coaches, volunteers and supporters. Our greatest impact and the success of everything we do starts at the grassroots.

When you look at our Provincial Team and Games, the leadership comes from our affiliates. They train our athletes, prepare our teams, and raise the funds and awareness- they do it all.

Our games are an amazing platform to show the work we do, but it is important to take a step back and recognize that we are so much more than big events. We are a movement that thrives year round at the community level. We can all celebrate what we have accomplished because we have all played a part in making these monumental accomplishments a reality.

We owe so much to our founding volunteers and athlete visionaries. It gives me great pride to see us honour their work by continuing to stay true to our mission and provide a chance for individuals with an intellectual disability achieve their best potential and create a more inclusive society.

I look forward to continuing to honour their commitment by reaching new athletes and communities, and continuing to strive to give every individual with an intellectual disability the opportunity to achieve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Johnny Byrne'.

Johnny Byrne President and CEO
Special Olympics Alberta

WEST WIND
GYMNASTICS CLUB



Advance Quality Sports and Competition

- \$1,031,507 was invested in sport and programs
- 120 athletes of Team Alberta competed in ten sports at the 2014 Special Olympics Canada Summer Games in Vancouver and took home 141 medals
- Over 500 athletes and 200 coaches and mission staff from 16 affiliates and N.W.T took part in the 2015 Special Olympics Alberta Winter Games in Grande Prairie, the most northern city to host a provincial Winter Games.
- Special Olympics Alberta figures skaters were selected to be part of Team Alberta for the 2015 Canada Winter Games in Prince George. The two figure skaters took home four gold medals.
- After outstanding performances from the National Summer Games, 11 Alberta athletes, one coach and three mission staff were selected to be part of the Team Canada's training squad to represent the country at the 2015 Special Olympics World Summer Games in Los Angeles.

Build Communities

- A partnership with Alberta Schools' Athletic Association was created to build Canada's first school based Unified Sports program
- Over 30 athletes and caregivers from nine affiliates took part in the first provincial Athlete Leadership Conference. Sessions included athlete speaker's bureau, governance and social media and interview skills
- Katie Saunders, an outstanding athlete from Calgary, was selected as the athlete representative on the Special Olympics Canada Board

Connect Fans & Funds

- \$705,962 invested in community development
- It was a big year for LETR. The return of its signature event, World's Largest Truck Convoy took place in Calgary and Grande Prairie. The event raised over \$122,500 and broke the North American record for most trucks with 300 participating. Overall, LETR and the Harley raffle gave over \$443,000 to Special Olympics Alberta.
- For the first time, live streaming was available for the Provincial Winter Games allowing viewers from across Alberta to watch figure skating, curling and floor hockey, reaching over 1,400 viewers.
- Volunteer Month provided awareness, recognition and recruitment for local programs and received an average weekly reach of 2,300 users on social media.
- UFC Experience Tour made a stop at Lethbridge providing a new audience to spread awareness of the Special Olympics movement. The event included a community works day with participation of eight athletes in mixed martial arts demonstrations, a dedicated Special Olympics area at the block party and a generous donation of \$10,000.

Movement Leadership

- Representatives from Red Deer, Whitecourt, Lacombe, Strathcona County, Lakeland, Edmonton and Leduc gathered at the Affiliate Leadership Conference to share best practices for fundraising and volunteer management.
- A revamped affiliate resource site was launched providing easier access to tools and resources for volunteers.
- Over 26 marketing kits were distributed to affiliates for grass roots use. The kits included streamlined templates for advertising, promotional items, guidelines and resources.

Volunteers- Drive the Movement

Volunteers are the backbone of the Special Olympics movement. Special Olympics would not exist today- and could not have been created- without the time, energy, commitment and enthusiasm of our volunteers.

Special Olympics Alberta would like to celebrate the milestones reached by our volunteers across Alberta in 2014-15.

35 Years

Audrey Lang, Calgary
Don McKinnon, Calgary

30 Years

Pat Scattergood, Drumheller
Shirley Kaye, Drumheller
Gloria Dickson, Edmonton

John Carr, Edmonton
Delphine Grimm, Medicine Hat

25 Years

Arlette Harding, Calgary
Betty Chizmadia, Calgary
Gloria Greenstein, Calgary
Sallie Szanik, Calgary
Martin McSween, Drumheller
Madeleine Blanchette,
Edmonton
Linda Christensen, Leduc
Neil Garbutt, Red Deer

20 Years

Denis Boisselle, Calgary
Gerry Rose, Calgary
Jill Walsh, Calgary
Kim Cunningham, Calgary
Sandy Boisselle, Calgary
Eileen Emann, Drumheller
Marian Pierce, Drumheller
Glen Bennett, Edmonton

Pat Bennett, Edmonton
Minnie Groten, Lethbridge
Karen Mengersen, Olds & District
Ann Garbutt, Red Deer
Hector Jean, St. Paul
Lucie Jean, St. Paul

15 Years

Dave Watson, Calgary
Ellen Mae Nish, Calgary
Lynn Price, Calgary
Marcelle Morin, Calgary
Marie Evans, Calgary
Masaye Tanaka, Calgary
Pat Desaulniers, Calgary

Robbie Hurley, Calgary
Ron King, Calgary
Ronda Sinclair, Calgary
Angela Enns, Drumheller
Kenneth Enns, Drumheller
Lorraine Enns-Seright, Drumheller
Chris Odding, Edmonton

Kathy Tauber, Edmonton
Kayleigh Dixon, Edmonton
Bruce Brown, Lethbridge
Nadine Chandler, Lethbridge
Pam Parker, Lethbridge
Linda Holden, Red Deer
Wendy Kopeck, Red Deer



10 Years

Diane Smith, Airdrie
 Tammy Hnatiuk, Airdrie
 Amy Campbell, Calgary
 Bob VanDeker, Calgary
 Brian Dale, Calgary
 Bruce Hale, Calgary
 Candace Tracey, Calgary

Doug Hulse, Calgary
 Megan McClelland, Calgary
 Shane Bolen, Calgary
 Sheryl Stenhouse, Calgary
 Suzanne Levesconte, Calgary
 Catherine Perry, Edmonton
 Chris Narbonne, Edmonton
 Elwin Worobec, Edmonton

Jacob Narbonne, Edmonton
 John Gunderson-Martin,
 Edmonton
 Leonard Poirier, Edmonton
 Adeline Nickel, Lethbridge
 Sue Leslie, Lethbridge
 Crystal Hounsone, Red Deer
 Ellen Cartier, St. Paul

5 Years

Ben McConkey, Calgary
 Cheryl Andrews, Calgary
 Chris Miko, Calgary
 Christina Powell, Calgary
 Corrine Sefton, Calgary
 Dallas Kitt, Calgary
 Dan McLeod, Calgary
 Donald Harsch, Calgary
 Glory MacKinnon, Calgary
 Jocelyn VanDecker, Calgary
 Josh Nicholas, Calgary
 Kat O'Reilly, Calgary
 Laurie Peterson, Calgary
 Leslie Rowett, Calgary

Linda Marek, Calgary
 Marie Powell, Calgary
 Neil Johnson, Calgary
 Robin Bogstie, Calgary
 Sheila Nichols, Calgary
 Shelby Ruttan, Calgary
 Carol Wideman, Camrose
 Colleen McKinstry, Camrose
 Graham Wideman, Camrose
 Angela Czerman, Drumheller
 Dave Sander, Edmonton
 Laurie Insole, Edmonton
 Leo Jensen, Edmonton

Lisa Sander, Edmonton
 Monique Hubick, Edmonton
 Steve Hannel, Edmonton
 Elaine Martin, Lethbridge
 Vanessa McCulloch, Lethbridge
 Abe Crawford, Olds & District
 Brian Maetche, Olds & District
 Dean Peachment, Olds & District
 Staci Robbie, Olds & District
 Kate Coleman, Red Deer
 Kerry Lowe, Red Deer
 Laurie Moskow, Red Deer
 Leslie Rahbek, Red Deer

Champions Are Created

From small school gyms in Edmonton to borrowed pool time in Lethbridge, Special Olympics athletes were learning how to play sports and develop skills at a time when their potential was not recognized.

These four athletes where pioneering Special Olympics in their community.

Brad Fedorchuk is currently the oldest and proudest floor hockey player with the Edmonton Vipers. When he first started over 30 years ago he was a star in track and field, skiing and swimming.



"My best memories of Special Olympics is competing in track and field in Grande Prairie, a floor hockey competition in Grande Prairie, competing in the 1988 Special Olympics Winter Games in Red Deer and in 1992 Vancouver National Summer Games in track and field," said Fedorchuk.

"Special Olympics changed my life because I've been able to make new friends and it has taught me to be outgoing."

In Lethbridge, **Jean Delaire** was a competitive speed skater in the 90's, but as he matured he branched out to other sports: floor hockey, 5-pin bowling, bocce ball and softball, with plans to start swimming this coming year. He considers himself a social butterfly and loves to joke around with friends. Special Olympics gave him a new circle of friends and supporters who believed in him.



"Being part of Special Olympics gives me confidence and I fit in like other athletes," said Delaire.

"Special Olympics has taught me self-respect even if I am special needs."

Happy, friendly and responsible is how friends and family describe **Michelle Sprogis** who has accumulated as many medals as memories. She started swimming in 1980 in a St. Albert pool where she excelled in her skill and was able to go to Vancouver in 1990 for her first National Games. Like most athletes, she tried other sports and took up bowling which also gave her the opportunity to be part of Team Alberta for the 2010 Special Olympics Summer Games in London, Ontario. Her experiences with Special Olympics encouraged Michelle to take on responsibility and set goals.



"Special Olympics taught me how to be on time and to get along with friends and coaches," said Sprogis.

"My best accomplishment was working at Bad Ass Jacks (italicized) for 11 years. Someone showed me how to do food prep and I learned. Now I work for UPS two days a week."

With four sports keeping him busy, **Stephen Leigh Pharis** shows no signs of slowing down. Some of his best memories where shared with fellow athletes and coaches like going to National Games in Ottawa in 1981 for bowling, P.E.I in 2004 for curling, and getting two gold and one silver in swimming in London in 2010. He states that his best accomplishments have been learning to swim, curl, and bowl.



"Special Olympics taught me how to play games and play fairly," said Pharis.

"Special Olympics made me better. I have lots of friends, I have fun and I've been able to travel a lot."

Every day, Special Olympics strives to develop motor skills, teach sport skills and the value of fair play to people with intellectual disabilities in communities across Alberta. Sports unleashes the full potential of athletes who are showing their communities, the province, the country and the world their undeniable abilities. They show that true champions are created not born.

Volunteers: The Driving Force for 35 Years

There is one resounding commonality that has been the driving force behind Special Olympics Alberta for the past 35 years - dedicated volunteers and coaches.

If it were not for people dedicated to creating a safe learning space for people with intellectual disabilities and strong belief in their abilities, Special Olympics Alberta would not be what it is today.

"The need for activities for athletes with a disability was badly needed. Some athletes could participate in community sports while they were younger, but then as their group aged, they were not able to keep up with sport groups that were age appropriate. Competing and even practicing in their age group was often physically unattainable and more often detrimental to their self esteem." - Louise Suru, past president of Special Olympics in Edmonton (1980)

"Many athletes were not encouraged by their families to find outside interests, mainly due to the lack of programs available. Not having the opportunity to be physically active, and learning to interact with others led to poor health, and poor social skills."

Special Olympics came from families wanting more for their child. This need identified in homes was a big catalyst to make the resources available in communities.

"In 1989, I started being part of Special Olympics in Prince George, BC. My son, Wade, needed an athletic activity just like his sisters. Once he turned 10, I enrolled him into swimming. I had done some competitive swimming in high school and I know how to swim and one day they needed help on the deck - a swim coach was born" - Sallie Szanik, Special Olympics swimming and alpine coach in Calgary from 1990 to present.

As the province embraced the movement, strong partnerships were created to ensure that Special Olympics programs would survive in communities across the Alberta and the Law Enforcement Torch Run rose to the challenge.

"There was a small handful of members when I first started. In 1987, I was asked to do a torch run in Calgary, not really knowing what it was all about, but I did like to run. Then I was told what the Law Enforcement

Torch Run was and I was asked if I wanted to do more and of course it sounded like fun." - Det. Theresa Garagan, Operation Council Chair on the Law Enforcement Torch Run and Special Olympics head coach of alpine skiing and athletics in Calgary.

"I started volunteering at a fundraiser called Cops and Lobsters and thought that was great. After more involvement I had an opportunity to be part of an amazing Torch Run across Alberta and ran into an opening ceremony in Edmonton. I thought "WOW" all these people love us, we must be doing something special so this made me want to do more. I cried from the sheer awe of it all"

As awareness grew, so did the volunteer base. Special Olympics was becoming part of post secondary studies in adapted physical education and a recognized sport organization for broader audiences to participate in.

"I started in 1995 as a volunteer figure skating coach for Edmonton. At Red Deer College in 1994-95, I had to complete practical hours for an adapted physical education class and I chose Special Olympics floor hockey and quite enjoyed it. In university I was asked by another volunteer Special Olympics figure skating coach if I would like to coach and I agreed. Soon after, I was assisting as the head coach and my volunteer career continued from there." - Michelle Deering, past figure skating head coach and staff with Special Olympics Alberta.

"When I agreed to become involved, it started with my passion for figure skating and as a coach to be able to pass my knowledge on to others. I fell in love with Special Olympics as I believed that all individuals should have the same opportunities."

"Special Olympics simply gives a place for people, who have previously been ostracized, a safe nurturing environment where they can belong and develop as athletes and individuals." - Michael Dartnell, present head coach of softball and floor hockey in Red Deer.

"On my first day I had absolutely no idea what to expect. I've still never forgot how it changed my life. One of the best decisions I've ever made was to join."

More people are being inspired by the movement- reaching more athletes and capturing the passion of volunteers. Special Olympics Alberta has an unwavering belief of the limitless abilities of our athletes, and building inclusive communities. This is only accomplished through the unstoppable force of volunteers who make it happen every day.





**2014 TEAM
ALBERTA**
SPECIAL OLYMPICS
ALBERTA



2014 Special Olympics Canada Summer Games

It was only an hour and a half flight for Team Alberta to touch down in beautiful British Columbia, but the journey to Summer Games took thousands of hours of training and liters of sweat shed.

The blue skies and lush greenery of Vancouver provided the perfect setting for the 2014 Special Olympics Canada Summer Games. The campus of University of British Columbia became the residence for 1,200 athletes from all across Canada. 2014 Team Alberta was the largest delegation the province has ever put together with 120 athletes, and 42 coaches and mission staff. Athletes competed in 10 sports: 5-pin bowling, 10-bowling, athletics, basketball, golf, powerlifting, rhythmic gymnastics, soccer, softball, and swimming from July 8 to 12.

There were injuries, late games and nail biting competitions that challenged all the members. But at the end of the day, athletes and coaches came out stronger. They were eager to shake opponents' hands, and take a thank you walk around the campus with a large "THANK YOU" banner to show how much they appreciated all the participants and volunteers who made this experience happen. It was not just 141 medals that Team Alberta took home, but a lifetime of memories.



2015 Special Olympics Alberta Winter Games

Tucked away in the heart of Alberta's north west is a city with a wealth of spirit and pride- Grande Prairie. From February 20 to 22, Grande Prairie played host for the first time to over 700 athletes and coaches from 16 affiliates across the province and N.W.T. for a Provincial Winter Games.

It was a fiery start at opening ceremonies at Revolution Place with live fire acrobatics and an energy infused Zumba flash mob turning up the heat to pump up all the teams.

Athletes young and old, seasoned and first-timers, displayed their best athletic feats. Rookie athletes Ryan Tapankov from Spruce Grove and Tyler Larson from Rocky Mountain House, both 13 years old, earned their first provincial games medals in speed skating. While these young athletes were racing against the clock, seasoned floor hockey teams of St. Albert and Vegreville Polecats battled to a double overtime with St. Albert taking home the gold.

The Winter Games also reached farther beyond its borders with live streaming of sport events. Through a partnership with Skate Canada Alberta and N.W.T. and coordination with games venues, Special Olympics Alberta was able to provide live coverage of figure skating, curling and floor hockey.

A weekend of intense competition and amazing sportsmanship defined the Winter Games and set the tone for future Special Olympics Alberta games to come!





Law Enforcement Torch Run Highlights: 2014-15

The Law Enforcement Torch Run® (LETR) for Special Olympics Alberta had another strong year of raising funds and awareness for our programs and athletes, starting with the summer Free the Fuzz season which donated over \$103,000 to Special Olympics Alberta from the six events at Walmart Canada locations across the province.

They kept that momentum going into the fall when LETR partnered with the Rotary Clubs of Grande Prairie, and the Alberta Motor Transport Association to break North American records as more than 300 truck drivers came out for the World's Largest Truck Convoy®, where over \$122,500 went directly to the Special Olympics Alberta Winter Games in Grande Prairie.

LETR is the Special Olympics' largest grass-roots fundraiser and public awareness vehicle internationally. In 2014, dedicated law enforcement volunteers raised more than \$67 million for Special Olympics Programs worldwide. Here in Alberta, for the 2014 – 2015 year, the LETR and the Harley Raffle proudly contributed over \$443,000.

LETR has evolved from a symbolic awareness run to a very significant, annual grass-roots fundraising effort conducted by law enforcement agencies. Utilizing every tool from merchandise sales to peer-to-peer fundraisers, the LETR raises funds to reach more athletes who can grow and thrive through the transformative power of sports.

In Alberta, 18 agencies in 17 communities contribute to LETR efforts annually, not only with events, but as Guardians of the Flame®, ensuring the delivery of the Special Olympics Flame of Hope™ (superscript) to the opening ceremony of Provincial Games, and sending off our local athletes to National and World Games.



Male Athlete
of the year

Philip Mullen | **Affiliate:** Crowsnest Pass **Sports:** Alpine Skiing, Golf

Philip is a decorated athlete who has represented Canada on the World Games stage. His next goal was to make it on Team Alberta 2016, so for the past two years, Philip has been training to reach that goal and as a result won gold in the advanced giant slalom at the Provincial Games. When he found out that he had been chosen, he cried. As an athlete, Philip has grown immensely and now sets his own goals, rather than his parents and coaches setting his goals for him. He works hard to reach them and knows when to push himself, as well as take advice from his coaches. In golf, he didn't want to listen to anyone at first, but this year he has come to the realization that listening and practice is going to help his game. Philip doesn't only think of himself and his own achievements. At Provincial Games in Grande Prairie, he cried every time his teammates and friends won medals. He is extremely supportive of all other athletes and truly embodies the spirit of Special Olympics.



Female Athlete
of the year

Mary-Jean Lawson | **Affiliate:** Lethbridge **Sports:** Swimming

Mary Jean has been with Special Olympics for over 20 years and has represented both Alberta at Nationals and Canada at World Games. Mary Jean has definitely grown in self-discipline, independence and self-confidence. Even though she is one of the older swimmers on the team, she keeps up with younger team members and shows them just what she can do. She never misses practice, and gives 110 percent at all times. She is a team player and is there to cheer on her fellow team mates. Mary Jean has blossomed as a person because of Special Olympics, and because of the strong friendships she has made with other athletes.



Team of the Year

Edmonton Cougars | **Affiliate:** Edmonton **Sports:** Floor Hockey

Erick Thompson- Manager/Assistant Coach, Fran Hyndman- Coach, Nick Insole- Coach,

Athletes: Andrew Buzon, David Chernowski, Clifford Hyndman, Steven Lynch, Craig Pawliuk, Nick Rolfe, Alex Spencer, Jesse Wells, Jonathan Whittaker, Crystal Savard, Catlin Budd, Mark Gillese, Christopher Mastervick, Doug Massey

The Edmonton Cougars floor hockey team have worked hard this year and have improved their physical fitness and understanding of the game. Their stamina has increased and the communication between players has improved immensely. This commitment and improved skills allowed them to take home the gold in the Beliveau division at the recent Provincial Games in Grande Prairie. The players and team really have matured greatly this past season. The team has an amazing attitude and commitment. They don't allow adversity to diminish their enthusiasm. Coaches, volunteers, family and friends come out to support them no matter where they play. That support has contributed greatly to their success. The Edmonton Cougars exemplify the true spirit of Special Olympics through their perseverance. No matter the odds against them, they always rose to the challenge. They were gracious in defeat and always brought their positive attitude to the next game.



Athlete Spirit Award

Alexandra Lo | **Affiliate:** Calgary **Sports:** Athletics, Alpine Skiing, Swimming

Alexandra has been enthusiastic in her endeavors and she always shows up with a smile on her face - be it to competitions, dances, or even practices. Encouraging other athletes, cheering on everyone regardless of her affiliation with them is something that just comes natural to her. Many coaches, athletes and parents have expressed how she puts a smile on their face, simply by being the joyful soul she is. She continues to spread her contagious smile and laughter wherever she goes. She has shown dedication and enthusiasm in everything she has done. She plays hard, and she practices hard. She gives her all during every practice, and she never refuses or bemoans any instructions given to her by a coach. She truly puts her heart into her sport.



Athlete Spirit Award

Mark Mengersen | Affiliate: Olds and District
Sports: Athletics, Basketball, Bowling, Curling, Golf, Floor Hockey, Softball

You would not recognize him without his glowing smile. Mark Mengersen is just happiness in a bottle. With a full schedule of participating in 10 out of 13 sports offered in Olds, Mark always makes time to cheer on his fellow athletes because he considers each one of them his “best friend”. Time and time again, coaches and volunteers alike have expressed how much of an inspiration Mark is to them. He praises the accomplishments of others and is open and willing to try and put his all in whatever sport is available to him.



Male Coach of the Year

Michael Dartnell | Affiliate: Red Deer **Sport:** Head Coach of Softball and Assistant Coach of Floor Hockey

Michael has been a coach with Special Olympics in Red Deer for the past 10 years, starting as an assistant with both the softball and floor hockey programs, eventually taking over the head coach positions with both sports. Under his guidance both programs have flourished with numbers increasing each year. Michael has a knack of determining the skill set of his players and putting them in positions on the team where they can be successful by making full use of their abilities. He also seeks out competitions that will challenge his players to increase their skills and confidence. This includes registering the competitive softball team in a Red Deer slo-pitch league. His methods have resulted in the Red Deer floor hockey and softball teams being successful at tournaments and Provincial Games where they have won numerous medals.

Michael’s priority has always been to ensure that the athletes have a positive experience. Winning games or medals is secondary to the players developing self-esteem, excelling their skills and enjoying the camaraderie of being part of a team.



Female Coach of the Year

Debbie Herman | Affiliate: Leduc **Sports:** Head Coach of Curling

Debbie is the head coach of the curling program in Leduc. Even when she is busy in her personal life, she puts everything on hold for a game or practice. When she can’t make a practice or game (which is extremely rare), the assistant coaches are given lesson plans and as much lead time as possible to ensure the event goes smoothly.

Debbie is well informed about the rules and skills of her sport. She always demonstrates professionalism and care for the athletes. When new parents come to the rink and they watch Debbie work with an athlete, they are amazed at how the athletes are immediately responsive and willing to work with her. Her mannerisms, soft spoken approach, and true love of her athletes and sport, are understood and felt by every participant. The athletes emulate her attitude and kindness and show it on and off the ice.



Volunteer Leadership Award

Linda Christensen | Affiliate: Leduc

Linda was a founding member of the Leduc affiliate 25 years ago. She continues today as a member of the Affiliate Management Committee and also coordinates the softball and bowling programs. She shows no sign of stopping. At the time, there was little to no support available for individuals with intellectual disabilities in the area, but Linda truly gave athletes in Leduc and surrounding areas a place to grow as individuals with the Special Olympics program. Not only does she help athletes grow, Linda is also a great mentor to new volunteers. She does not leave any volunteers behind. Regardless of the role, she is there to help them grow and ensures that they are supported and recognized for their work. She encourages all members of Special Olympics to maximize their full potential in themselves. Because of Linda, every one of all abilities can find a place to grow in Leduc.



Amanda McCord | **Affiliate:** Olds and District

Amanda started volunteering with Special Olympics Alberta- Olds and District in September 2014 when she retired from nursing. She helped with the bowling program twice a week and with the swimming program once a week. She is now assisting with the softball program. Although Amanda is from Innisfail, she has fully immersed herself and is willing to help in any way needed. It almost seems like she plans her life around the needs of Special Olympics. She has a good understanding of the athletes and interacts well with them. She is willing to help get new programs started and wants to always know how she can help. It is not often that someone with no relation to the cause drops in and helps out to the extent Amanda has.



Det. Theresa Garagan | **Affiliate:** Calgary **Sports:** Head Coach of Athletics and Alpine Skiing

Theresa has been a critical component in raising awareness and funding for Special Olympics and is a coach and mentor to the athletes in Calgary. When she is not busy coaching or training with the athletes, she works tirelessly at events around the community to raise the profile of Special Olympics and raise money so the athletes can continue to train and compete. She never misses an event.

Whether she is coaching, fundraising or just acting as a cheerleader for the athletes, Theresa consistently contributes to Special Olympics. In addition to her contribution of countless hours of coaching athletes and raising money at events, she has provided athletes with many additional opportunities to shine. Theresa engages athletes in public speaking at events, encouraging them to attend conferences, gets them to participate in LETR events, attends the games with them, and just generally encourages them to grow and experience new things. She is undeniably one of the biggest champions of Special Olympics as a LETR member and Special Olympics volunteer.

LETR Community Spirit Award | Red Deer

Red Deer's entire community shows incredible support towards the Special Olympics movement through the strong engagement of multiple law enforcement agencies involved and the substantial support of local businesses. All of this together supporting local LETR efforts generates stronger awareness and support that is proven in event successes. This year, the Red Deer Free the Fuzz event raised more money than any other community in the province. When you see a smaller city reaching above and beyond major centres, you know that this is a team that works together.

Murray Koch Youth Development | Grande Prairie

Grande Prairie has done amazing work with their youth programming this past year. They have continued to expand both their Active Start and FUNdamentals programs. They have seen their number of registered participants grow as they continue to advertise the programs in the community. They have also been able to incorporate volunteer opportunities in their programs for the students of the Grande Prairie Regional College. Grande Prairie is excited about their growth and striving to continue to deliver sustainable youth programming.

MDA Community Leadership Award | Grande Prairie

Grande Prairie has shown amazing community engagement and dedication in the year leading up to and during Provincial Games. The city pulled out all the stops with a show stopping opening ceremonies and embraced all the Special Olympics athletes, coaches to make sure that they displayed outstanding northern hospitality. In the past year they've also created a strong Athlete Leadership Council, where athlete representatives have become leaders in the community and have spread awareness of Special Olympics at every opportunity.

A Reflection on Past Games



1980 ALBERTA SPECIAL OLYMPICS SUMMER GAMES- RED DEER **June 12-14, 1980**

This was the first provincial games after Alberta's incorporation.

The opening ceremony was held in Red Deer, but multiple venues in different cities and towns hosted sport specific competitions.

Age categories: 10-12, 13-15, 16-18, 19+

Venues: Alberta Hospital in Edmonton, Avonmore School in Edmonton, Baker Centre in Calgary, Daysland School in Daysland, Innisfail, Lethbridge, Michener Centre in Red Deer, North Central School of New Hope in Barrhead, Parkland School in Red Deer, Robin Hood School in Sherwood Park, J.H. Sisson School in Yellowknife NWT, Winnifred Stewart School in Edmonton, Western Industrial Research and Training Centre in Edmonton, Yukon Rehabilitation Centre in Whitehorse, Yukon

Sports:

Swimming (25m freestyle, 50 m freestyle, 25 m backstroke, 50m backstroke, 25m breast stroke, 4 x25m relay)

Diving (front dive, free style, back dive)

Track and field: (softball throw, high jump, 50m dash, standing long jump, 100m dash, running long jump,

5-Pin Bowling and 10-Pin Bowling



1986 CANADIAN SPECIAL OLYMPICS SUMMER GAMES- CALGARY **July 15-20, 1980**

This marked Alberta's first time hosting a National Games.

Total number of Athletes and Coaches: 1019

Summer Sports:

Track and Field: 280 athletes

Bowling: 195 athletes

Swimming: 294 athletes

Demonstration Sport Soccer:

Floor Hockey: 195 athletes

55 athletes





Venues: **Track and Field:** Glenmore Athletic Park, **Floor Hockey:** Lindsay Park Sports Centre, **Swimming:** Lindsay Park Sport Centre, **Bowling:** Fairview Bowling Lanes, **Opening Ceremony:** McMahon Stadium

 **Fun fact:** 12,000 Canadians carried the torch to Calgary



1988 CANADIAN SPECIAL OLYMPICS WINTER GAMES- EDMUNDSTON, NB March 7-11, 1988

This was the first winter games in Canada.

Total number of Athletes and Coaches: **300** **6 provinces participated**

Winter Sports:

Alpine Skiing

Figure Skating

Demonstration Sport:

Cross-Country

Speed Skating

Snowshoeing

Venues: **Edmundston Golf and Country Club:** Cross Country, **Edmundston Forum:** Speed Skating and Figure Skating

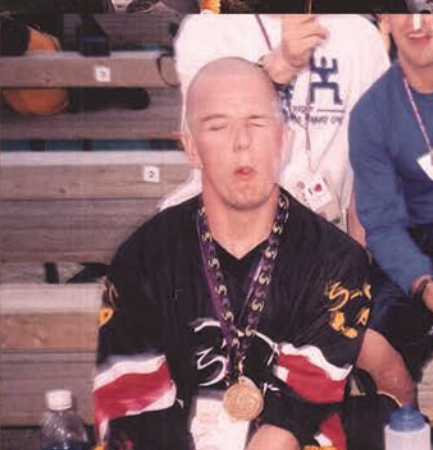


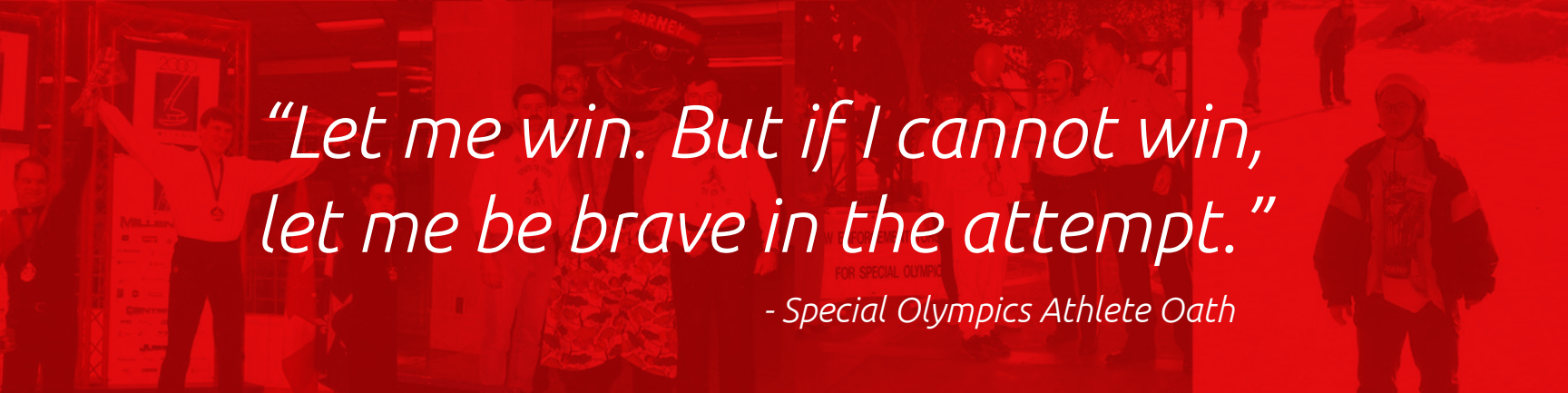
Fun Fact: Mila Mulrone, the wife of Prime Minister, Brian Mulrone, made the opening address to all the competitors at opening ceremonies.

Team Alberta consisted of 30 Alberta athletes and placed 3rd overall in medals.



Special Olympics Alberta
CELEBRATING 35 YEARS



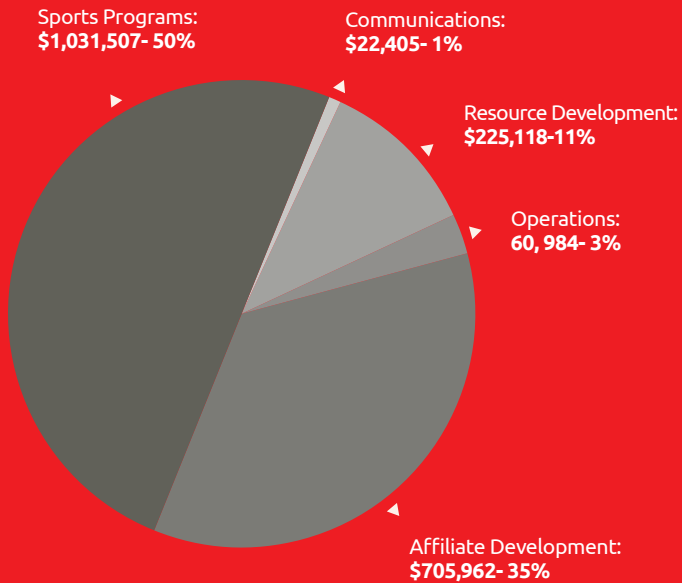


*"Let me win. But if I cannot win,
let me be brave in the attempt."*

- Special Olympics Athlete Oath

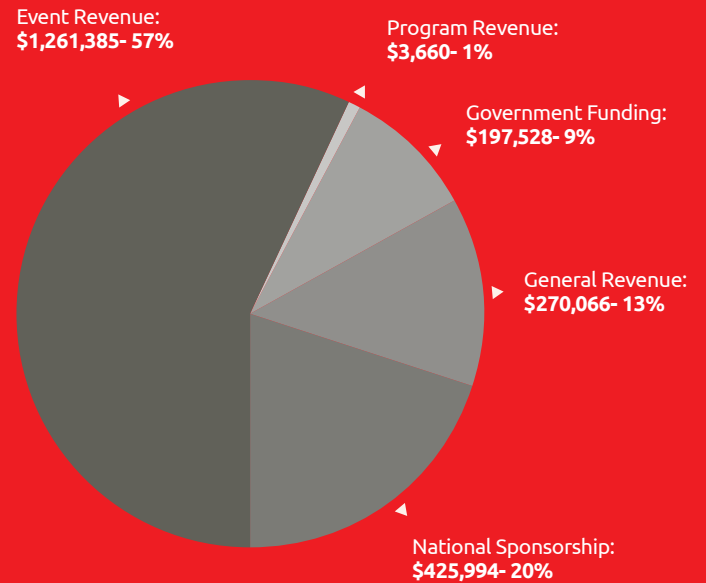


Where Does Your Money Go?



Actual **2014/2015** Total Expenses **\$2,045,976**

Sources of Funding



Actual **2014/2015** Total Revenue **\$2,158,633**



Did You Know? In 1984 Special Olympics Alberta's total expenses were \$33,387 and total revenue was \$60,604 where 45% came from donations.

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