

MEDIA RELEASE

Special Olympics BC inducts six new members into Hall of Fame

In 35th year, SOBC celebrates growth and recognizes significant contributions and achievements of Hall of Fame inductees

In 2015, Special Olympics BC is celebrating 35 years of changing lives through sport, and honouring six new members of the [SOBC Hall of Fame](#).

November 26, 2015, is the 35th anniversary of Special Olympics BC's official incorporation date. Back in 1980, Special Olympics in B.C. was a concept, with two annual track and field events in Prince George and Kamloops, an independent track team in Burnaby, and several floor hockey teams in Greater Vancouver, all operating separately from each other. Thirty-five years later, SOBC now provides year-round, high-quality sports programs and competitions for more than 4,400 athletes with intellectual disabilities in 57 communities around the province, thanks to the vital efforts of more than 3,400 dedicated volunteers and the support of generous sponsors.

SOBC's current and longtime President & CEO Dan Howe has been involved with the organization ever since its inception.

"In the early 1980s, we heard from critics that sport was too stressful and the rules were too complex for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Some doubted Special Olympics would be successful. However, as they so often do, the athletes of Special Olympics proved them wrong. Given the opportunity to train and compete, the coaching to develop, and the environment to be successful, athletes enthusiastically accepted the challenge and have never looked back," Howe says. "Not only have these athletes proven that they can handle the stress and understand the rules of sport, they have won the admiration of many with their inspirational efforts, dedication, outstanding performances, and love of sport."

Six outstanding individuals and organizations who have made significant and long-lasting contributions to Special Olympics BC are being honoured this year as new members of the SOBC Hall of Fame. Induction into the Hall of Fame celebrates the most outstanding achievements and contributions, and is one of the highest honours bestowed within the Special Olympics BC organization. This year's inductees are:

- Athlete Inductee: Kelowna Grizzlies softball team
- Local Builder Inductee: Jo Osborne
- Provincial Builder Inductees: Doug Holtby and Blair Shier
- Sponsor Inductees: Goldcorp and Staples
 - *Please see below for inductee bios*

"Special Olympics BC is a remarkable organization because of the truly remarkable people involved. We have long been inspired by and grateful to this year's Hall of Fame inductees, and we are so glad to celebrate these deserving individuals and organizations," Howe says.

The Kelowna Grizzlies are being recognized in a ceremony in Kelowna on November 26 from 7 to 8 p.m. at the Rotary Centre Atrium, 421 Cawston Ave. The Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island-based Hall of Fame inductees were celebrated in a ceremony at the SOBC Leadership Summit on October 3. High-resolution photos are available from the October event, and media members are welcome to attend the Kelowna event.

About Special Olympics BC

Special Olympics BC is dedicated to providing individuals with intellectual disabilities opportunities to enrich their lives and celebrate personal achievement through positive sport experiences. In 57 communities around the province, we provide year-round training and competitive opportunities in 18 different sports to more than 4,400 athletes of all ages and abilities, thanks to the dedicated efforts of over 3,400 volunteers. For more information, please visit www.specialolympics.bc.ca. Find us on Facebook and Twitter: www.facebook.com/specialolympicsbc / @sobcsociety.

Media contact

Megan Grittani-Livingston
Special Olympics BC Manager, Communications
P: 604-737-3077
E: megan@specialolympics.bc.ca

2015 Special Olympics BC Hall of Fame Inductees

Athlete Inductee: Kelowna Grizzlies softball team

The Kelowna Grizzlies are the only B.C. team to ever compete and win medals in three Special Olympics World Games. They have been playing together for nearly 25 years, and while some members have stepped away, the core group has remained the same. In 1999, they became the first Special Olympics BC softball team to make it to World Games. They went on to win a gold medal! This team continued to work hard, and in 2010, they won the right to represent Canada at the 2011 Special Olympics World Summer Games in Greece. They tied for gold, but were awarded silver based on runs for and against.

The Kelowna Grizzlies set a B.C. record by representing Canada for the third time at a World Games when they competed in the 2015 Special Olympics World Summer Games in Los Angeles, where they earned a bronze medal.

[View all SOBC Hall of Fame Athlete Inductees](#)

Local Builder Inductee: Jo Osborne

Since 1986, Jo Osborne has made significant contributions to Special Olympics BC. She started volunteering with SOBC – Victoria and over the years has held many positions, including Local Coordinator. But her efforts and influence did not stop with the Victoria Local; Osborne held the position of Regional Coordinator for Region 6 for 15 years, served as the Chair of the SOBC Leadership Council, and was a member of the SOBC Board of Directors.

Osborne also acted as Chef de Mission for Region 6 to at least six Provincial Games and was mission staff on two provincial teams to National Games. Osborne has been a friend to all, knew every athlete's name, and attended as many events, training sessions, and meetings as she could in order to bring the Region, and later the province, together.

When the volunteers in her Region were asked why she would be a good candidate for the SOBC Hall of Fame, they said that Osborne's communication skills helped them build the Region. They felt she worked as diligently at the provincial level as she did at the regional level to represent the views of volunteers.

[View all SOBC Hall of Fame Local Builder Inductees](#)

Provincial Builder Inductees: Doug Holtby and Blair Shier

Doug Holtby volunteered for 15 years as a member of the Special Olympics BC Board of Directors, serving from 1996 to 2011. During his time on the Board, SOBC refocused its efforts on growth, quality, and sustainability, and Holtby's guidance during this entire process was invaluable. Holtby introduced SOBC to many of our major sponsors and helped build those relationships.

Blair Shier served on the SOBC Board of Directors from 1996 to 2000. During his time on the Board, the Special Olympics organization underwent a very involved rebranding and Shier's guidance during this entire process was invaluable. He also provided critical assistance in building our base of contacts and helped SOBC develop new sources of revenue.

Since 1998, both Holtby and Shier have provided leadership and direction for the Sports Celebrities Festival, which has become a cornerstone for providing funds and exposure for Special Olympics while fostering awareness and inclusion for SOBC athletes. The SCF has now raised \$4 million for its charities, including \$2 million for SOBC alone.

Shier and Holtby have both made a significant impact on SOBC, benefitting the organization not only over the past 20 years, but long into the future.

[View all SOBC Hall of Fame Provincial Builder Inductees](#)

Sponsor Inductees: Goldcorp and Staples

Goldcorp began their support of Special Olympics BC as a major sponsor of the Final Fore Golf Tournament in 2005. To acknowledge their significant support, in 2010 the tournament was renamed the Goldcorp Invitational Golf Tournament. Close to \$1.8 million has been raised through these events for SOBC.

In 2010, Goldcorp made a \$1 million commitment to Special Olympics BC over four years to assist with the development of youth programming. This gift from Goldcorp allowed SOBC to more than double the number of youth programs offered around the province. Now many more children with intellectual disabilities as young as two years old are learning vital social and motor skills and becoming active in sport.

In 2015, Goldcorp renewed their support, and pledged an additional \$1 million over four years to continue their support of SOBC, enable further growth of youth programs, and help with the establishment of new program offerings that are increasing opportunities for SOBC athletes to train, compete, and improve their health. Goldcorp is passionate about making a difference for Special Olympics athletes.

Staples became a national sponsor in 2000 and has raised over \$766,000 for Special Olympics BC in this 15-year partnership. Additionally, their efforts have built considerable awareness for Special Olympics.

Over and above the annual Give a Toonie Share a Dream campaign, Staples has supported the Sports Celebrities Festival as a national partner and provided gift cards for office purchases to help offset the budget. They also host an annual staff softball tournament where SOBC athletes are invited to participate on every team.

Staples has made a significant impact on SOBC through their 15-year involvement.

[View all SOBC Hall of Fame Sponsor Inductees](#)