



**When was
the last time
you won
when
someone
else did?**



**For more information
about Partners Club®,
call your local
Special Olympics office.**

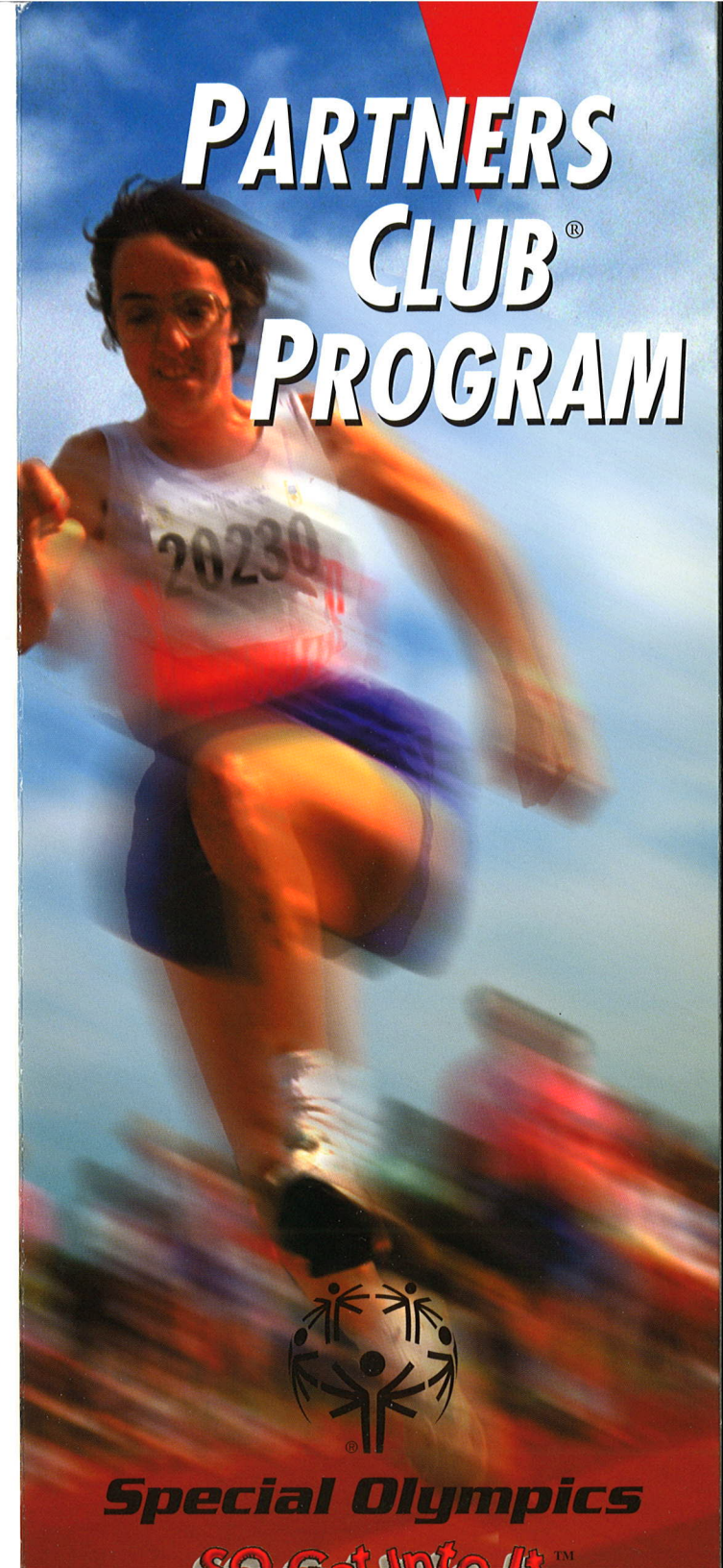


Special Olympics
SO Get Into It™

*Created by the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation for the
Benefit of Persons with Mental Retardation*

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**PARTNERS
CLUB®
PROGRAM**



Special Olympics

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Whenever two people interact, they're bound to learn something from each other. It's no different when training for a sport. The partners work out week after week as they grow stronger and improve skills. They push each other to do their best. They train together, sweat together... and when one athlete wins, they win together, too.

Partners Club® is a unique program that teams your special education students with other students in your elementary, junior high or high school — through sports. Partners Club brings together Special Olympics athletes — athletes with mental retardation or other closely related developmental disabilities — and volunteer students without mental retardation who serve on a regular basis as peer coaches training athletes for upcoming Special Olympics competitions in a variety of sports. Each pair trains together during the school day, meeting after school or on weekends. Only a few hours together each week give the partners a chance to assist athletes in improving their sports skills, prepare for upcoming competitions and develop meaningful relationships.



The Partners Club at Mark Twain Middle School in Fairfax, Virginia, is one example of how this program can benefit everyone. Nancy Julia, the school's physical education teacher, originally brought Partners Club to the school as one way to involve special education students with other students at Twain. Today the Partners Club program is so successful that Special Olympics athletes from other centers all over the county are coming to Twain to participate. Because of the many additional coaches who volunteered to assist with training, Julia's athletes attended over 100 competitions. For this accomplishment Twain was given an award by Special Olympics Virginia for its Partners Club involvement and participation.

"We like to get everyone involved,"

Julia said. "Students with mental retardation need to feel accepted by *all* of their peers, with or without mental retardation. Having a buddy to learn from helps tremendously. Their partners are also role models. They have someone to teach them not only sports skills, but social skills, too. How to get along, have respect for others, teamwork, cooperation, focus...Partners Club trains these students for more than just sports."

Partners may stay together until graduation, or switch each year. For volunteer Elaine Page, her involvement in Partners Club while in high school was a deciding factor in what to do after graduation. "Just being involved influenced what I wanted to be. The athletes touch your lives. For me, nothing was as powerful. That's why I became a special education teacher."

Parents are encouraged by the positive changes they see in their children. "This program has allowed my son Dallas to become a real teenager by being around other teens and peer coaches," says Jim Santos. "It's allowed him to participate in sports and other activities with students, like go to the mall, or to dances, or to the football games. He's not just 'that special ed kid' anymore. The other students see him and say, 'That's Dallas.' He's been given an identity at that school as well as a sense of pride and accomplishment."

As a special education teacher, physical education teacher, principal or school administrator, you can help motivate students to join an existing program or



form a Partners Club at your school. It's not difficult. Special Olympics can provide you with all the information, training and support you need and together with parents, students, families and neighbors, along with your local Special Olympics Program, help make your program a success.