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SPECIAL OLYMPICS OKLAHOMA ATHLETES HEAD TO GREECE FOR 2011 WORLD SUMMER GAMES

*Oklahoma Athletes Join 315 Athletes and 125 Coaches From Special Olympics Team USA
As They Journey to Greece for the Country's Largest Sporting Event of the Year*

Tulsa, Okla. – June 8, 2011 – After months of rigorous training and preparation, Special Olympics **Oklahoma** athletes are finally on their way to the most spectacular sporting event happening this year - Special Olympics World Summer Games ATHENS 2011. Special Olympics Team USA, comprising 315 athletes as well as 125 coaches, will unite from June 25 – July 4 with 7,000 athletes from nearly 180 nations to compete in these World Games. In addition, this vast event will draw more than 25,000 volunteers, 3,000 event officials and thousands of families, spectators and journalists from every continent. **Four Oklahoma** athletes will join 315 athletes from every state and the District of Columbia and 125 coaches and managers uniting to comprise Special Olympics Team USA. They will all come together in Baltimore, Maryland on June 18 before the entire team departs for Greece that weekend. These World Games will be the milestone event of a long-lasting movement, founded in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, to create a world of inclusion and acceptance. In Athens, the birthplace of modern sport, where the true values of competition were born, the talents and skills of Special Olympics athletes will remind us what the World Games are really about, where all participants are winners in their struggle for respect, inclusion and unity.

“We are very excited to go back to the home of the modern Olympics. The athletes and delegates are looking forward to participating in Opening and Closing Ceremonies in the historic Panathenaic Stadium. We are very proud of the athletes who have worked hard preparing for these Games and hope that all of Oklahoma will follow the Games at <http://www.athens2011.org/en/index.asp>. We know our athletes will make you proud,” said Teri Hockett, Special Olympics Oklahoma Program Director and Team USA Sports Manager for Athletics.

“Through hard work, dedication and commitment, Special Olympics Team USA athletes will be the most inspiring competitors in the world,” said Special Olympics North America President and Managing Director, Bob Gobrecht. “Competing in the World Games is a chance of a lifetime for many of our athletes, but also a chance for the rest of the world to witness the accomplishments and victories of people with intellectual disabilities.”

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INFORMATION ABOUT OKLAHOMA'S ATHLETES

James Holder - Jenks – Athletics – distance runner

- James is a 20-year old runner involved in Special Olympics for 7 years. He just recently graduated from Jenks High School, where he was also on the honor roll. He runs distance races and won first place in his age group in a Jenks ½ Marathon as well. He won a Trojan Spirit Award from the Jenks High School Track/Cross Country Team.
- James competed in the 2010 National Games in Nebraska in the 3,000M, 5,000M, 10,000M and Relay.
- James enjoys computer games, reading and running
- Special Olympics has changed James' life by giving him more self-confidence and allowing him to meet new people and make many friends.
- "It is a HUGE honor to be selected to compete at World Games. I take representing Oklahoma very seriously. I am excited every day to train and can't wait to meet my Team USA teammates!" said James Holder, Special Olympics Oklahoma athlete.
- "James is dedicated to his sport because running is something he loves. He always displays exemplary sportsmanship. He is a great friend and teammate. James has a great sense of humor and loves to laugh even at himself. He is an exceptional athlete with lots of talent," said Teri Hockett, Special Olympics Oklahoma Program Director.

Katy Lew – Tulsa – Bocce

- Katy is a 48-year old Tulsa athlete, and she has been involved in Special Olympics for 10 years. She competes in bocce, aquatics, track, team basketball and snowshoeing. Katy has worked at St. Francis Hospital for the past 30 years.
- Katy competed in the 2010 National Games in Nebraska in Unified Bocce.
- Katy enjoys reading, puzzles, music and movies.
- Special Olympics has changed Katy's life through the wonderful people she has met and the great new friends she has made. Katy is healthier because of her participation, and Special Olympics makes her life exciting.
- "I am very excited to be a part of Team USA and proud to represent our great country at the 2011 World Summer Games. As a Global Messenger, I will share my experience with everyone," said Kay Lew, Special Olympics Oklahoma athlete.
- "Katy has grown into a self-confident woman with a well-rounded life, filled with friends, challenges and goals. All of this is due to her experience with Special Olympics. She is a good leader for her teammates on a daily basis. She has exceptional 'people' skills," said Teri Hockett, Special Olympics Oklahoma Program Director.

Chris Holmes – Poteau – Bocce

- Chris is a 20-year old athlete who has competed in Special Olympics for 12 years. He competes in bocce, pentathlon and team basketball. Chris is a recent high school graduate where he played football. He also was named the 2009 Athlete of the Year in the Kiamichi Area.
- Chris competed in the 2010 National Games in Nebraska as a pentathlete in athletics.
- Chris enjoys sports, video games, NASCAR and OU sports.
- Special Olympics has changed Chris' life by enabling him to meet different people and make new friends. It pushes him to be a better athlete through his training and competition. It allows him to travel to places he has never been before.

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- “It’s an honor for me to be able to compete for Team USA in Athens. I love the USA! I will be glad and excited to meet new people from different states and countries,” said Chris Holmes, Special Olympics Oklahoma athlete.
- “Chris is a hard worker and always supports his teammates offering encouragement and cheering them on to put forth their best effort. He is a team player and always very respectful. He is a fantastic athlete. Chris is a bit shy, but continues to develop more self-confidence through Special Olympics,” said Teri Hockett, Special Olympics Oklahoma Program Director.

Barry Hemphill – Sand Springs – Bowling

- Barry is a 24-year old athlete who has competed in Special Olympics for 17 years. He competes in pentathlon, bowling and is just starting golf. He works at Pizza Hut as a cook and server.
- Barry competed in the 2010 National Games in Nebraska as a pentathlete in athletics.
- Barry enjoys music, video games and hanging out with his friends.
- Special Olympics has changed Barry’s life by giving him so many new friends and new opportunities to travel.
- “Attending World Games means EVERYTHING to Barry!” Said Teri Hockett, Special Olympics Oklahoma Program Director.
- “Barry is a good kid with a great attitude. He’s happy and enjoys meeting new people. Barry is easy going and friendly, and loves to have fun. He’s also very dedicated to training and competition, and always gives 100%. Barry is a ‘party of one’ everywhere he goes! He finds fun and excitement in every situation,” said Hockett.

Special Olympics Team USA held a training camp in San Diego, California, in March. Since then these athletes have been training in their home communities to get ready for Athens. Athletes who were selected for Special Olympics Team USA qualified through their own state Special Olympics programs.

This will be the 13th Special Olympics World Summer Games. Every two years, thousands of Special Olympics athletes worldwide come together to showcase their athletic skills and celebrate the spirit of Special Olympics. Alternating between Summer Games and Winter Games, Special Olympics World Games bring public attention to the talents and capabilities of people with intellectual disabilities, helping to change attitudes and break down barriers that excluded them from the mainstream of the community.

Sponsors of Special Olympics Team USA are Procter & Gamble, as the Proud Sponsor of Moms, the American Federation of Teachers and MTM Recognition. Special thanks go to Champion, the official performance apparel supplier of Special Olympics Team USA. Loudmouth is a product supplier of Special Olympics Team USA’s golf team.

For more information on Special Olympics Team USA, visit <http://www.specialolympicsteamusa.org> or find additional information at Special Olympics World Summer Games official website: <http://www.athens2011.org>

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About Special Olympics Oklahoma

The Mission of Special Olympics is to provide a year-round program of sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. Today 9,500 Special Olympics Oklahoma athletes participate in more than 120 sports competitions and training clinic opportunities every year. Competition is offered in 15 official sports. There are opportunities for thousands of volunteers. Visit www.sook.org or call 918-481-1234 for more information.

About Special Olympics

Special Olympics is an international organization that changes lives through the power of sport by encouraging and empowering people with intellectual disabilities, promoting acceptance for all, and fostering communities of understanding and respect worldwide. Founded in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, the Special Olympics movement has grown from a few hundred athletes to more than 3.7 million athletes in over 170 countries in all regions of the world, providing year-round sports training, athletic competition and other related programs. Special Olympics now takes place every day, changing the lives of people with intellectual disabilities in places like China and from regions like the Middle East to the community playgrounds and ball fields in every small neighborhood's backyard. Special Olympics provides people with intellectual disabilities continuing opportunities to realize their potential, develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, and experience joy and friendship. Visit Special Olympics at www.specialolympics.org. Engage with us on: [Twitter @specialolympics](https://twitter.com/specialolympics); fb.com/specialolympics; youtube.com/specialolympicshq, and specialolympicsblog.wordpress.com.

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