

Dear Friend,

Thank-you for your interest in joining the Special Olympics Oklahoma volunteer family!

Since 1969 Special Olympics Oklahoma has been dedicated to providing children and adults with intellectual disabilities the means to achieve their dreams and reach their potential through sports training and competition. We offer year round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for over 9,500 Oklahoma athletes ages 8 & above.

We do this with the support, dedication, and commitment of more than 10,000 volunteers just like you! Volunteers make it possible for Special Olympics Oklahoma athletes to express their great courage, experience the joy of achievement, and share their amazing gifts with other Special Olympics athletes, their families, and the community.

This handbook provides general information about Special Olympics Oklahoma, volunteer opportunities, and how to work with Special Olympics athletes. Thank you for your support of Special Olympics. We hope your experience will be a thrilling and rewarding one!

Sincerely,
Special Olympics Oklahoma

THE SPORTS

Special Olympics Oklahoma offers competition in 16 sports:

Athletics, Aquatics
^*Basketball, *Bocce, *Bowling
Equestrian, *Flag Football, Golf, *Horseshoes,
Powerlifting, Snowshoeing, *Soccer, ^*Softball
Speedskating, ^*Volleyball
Winter Alpine Skiing,

Two training programs are also offered:

Motor Activities Training Program (MATP)
Young Athletes Program, Stars of the Future

* Sports that include unified competition. **Unified Sports®** bring together people with & without intellectual disabilities on the same team for sports training and competition.

^ Sports that include skills competition in addition to team play.

VOLUNTEER FAQs

How do volunteers know when they may be needed?

Event schedules are posted on our website. Fall & Spring Schedules are posted in Aug. & Feb. Winter & Summer State Games Volunteer Flyers are posted in Nov. & Mar. Schedules include the volunteer contact for each event. Schedules are also available through the SOOK office. Fundraising Events, where volunteers are needed, may also be listed.

How many events are there each year?

Each year more than *120 area competition events* are offered throughout the state. At the end of each competition season (fall & spring) athletes have the opportunity to compete in Winter and Summer State Games. *Winter State Games*, a 2 day event, is held on the OU Campus and surrounding area each January. Over 2,000 athletes compete in Bowling, Basketball, and Volleyball. *Summer State Games*, a 3 day event, is held on the OSU Campus each May. Nearly 4,300 athletes compete in 10 different sports.

How do I get started?

Submit a *volunteer application* (required of all individual volunteers). *Check the schedule* and *make contact* with the person listed for the event where you want to volunteer.

Can Groups volunteer?

Businesses, civic organizations, churches, schools, etc. often volunteer together. Groups are required to complete a *Group Registration Form* and submit it when they check in at the event.

Are there any age guidelines?

Those under 16 must be accompanied by an adult. Those under 18 must have parental approval & signature on the Volunteer Application. Not all volunteer positions are appropriate for the very young, even when with a parent.

What will I do as a volunteer at these events?

See the list on the *next page* for competition event volunteer job descriptions.

What other volunteer opportunities are available?

Other opportunities are *listed on the back* of the brochure.

COMPETITION EVENT VOLUNTEERS

This list gives a general description of volunteer positions you will find at Special Olympics competitions. Volunteer jobs will vary with the type of sporting event. Instruction/training is provided at the event by venue directors or other officials.

Sports Volunteers

Staging Crew: Organize athletes into assigned groups (heats) just prior to their competition time. Guides escort athletes by heats to starting line.

Starting Line Crew/Officials: Check that the correct athletes are in position, explain starting procedure, signal to begin (race, throw a ball, jump, swim, etc.)

Timers/Measurers/Judges/Recorders: Keep track of athletes' progress (time races, spot & measure distance, judge dives). Record scores, assign order of finish.

Awards: Take athletes & official scores to awards area. Awards stagers keep athletes in finish order. Others assist in the presentation of ribbons &/or medals.

Referees, umpires, and scorekeepers are needed for team sports.

General

Registration: This involves team, family, or volunteer check-in.

Olympic Village: Volunteers are needed to assist in a variety of activities (crafts, karaoke, souvenir sales, games, etc.) while not competing.

Family Hospitality: Volunteers man areas where families can receive refreshment & information.

Set-up & Clean-up: Sometimes extra help is needed in preparing a venue (decorations, hanging signs, pitching tents, etc.). Special Olympics Oklahoma always tries to leave an area cleaner than when the event began. Some events are big enough to need extra help with clean-up.



WORKING with SPECIAL OLYMPICS ATHLETES

Special Olympics should be a rewarding experience for everyone whether athlete, volunteer, or family member.

To ensure this, the following suggestions and ideas should be observed.

Remember, people with & without special needs are more alike than different. Special Olympics athletes, like everyone else, want to have fun and make friends!

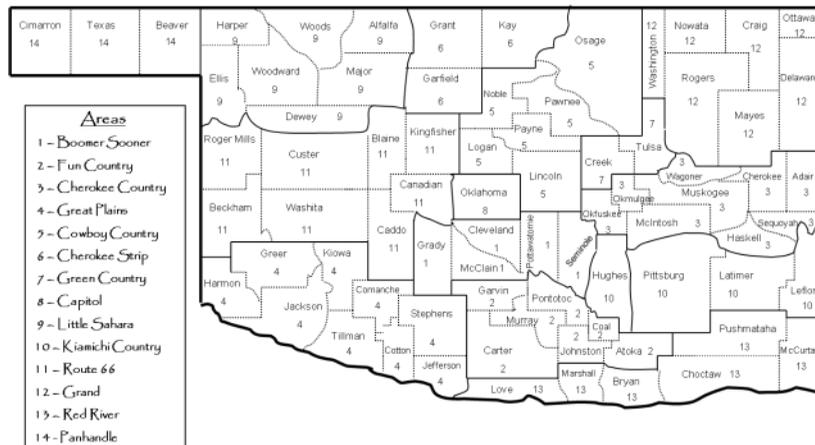
Many people ask “How do I treat a Special Olympics athlete?” The answer: Act the same way you would toward any other person of that same age. Be yourself!

Enjoy the interactions that are part of the Special Olympics experience, but don't be afraid to establish limits. Don't be afraid to ask coaches or other volunteers if unsure about something (appropriate behavior, problems occurring).

Recognize & praise individual efforts and overall performance, regardless of place finish. Congratulations are encouraged for all of the competitors, be it a “high five”, a pat on the back, a hearty handshake, or the occasional hug if initiated by the athlete.

Children & adults compete in Special Olympics. Be sensitive to the age group you are working with. “Kids” may be ok for children, but not adults. Using the term “athlete” is appropriate for all.

SOOK Area Map



VOLUNTEERS MAKE IT HAPPEN!

COMPETITION EVENT VOLUNTEER

Be one of the 1,000's that keep competitions running smoothly!

AREA MANAGEMENT TEAM

OK is divided into 14 areas. Each has a team dedicated to administering the Area Program.

BOOSTER CLUBS!

Everyone likes to be cheered for! Form a club in your school or town. Then attend events to cheer for your hometown athletes.

LIKE TO COMPETE?

Become a Unified Sports Partner! Join with Special Olympics athletes to form a team. (Information on request).

GLOBAL MESSENGER MENTOR

SOOK athletes & mentors are trained to make presentations to assist with Outreach

COACHING

Coaches must be certified by SOOK in the sport they wish to coach. Trainings are offered throughout the year.

**Be a fan™ of determination:
Volunteer!**

For more information contact:
1.800/722.9004 or 918.481.1234
info@sook.org www.sook.org



Special Olympics

Oklahoma

Be a fan™

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

VOLUNTEERS MAKE IT HAPPEN!

SPECIAL OLYMPICS OATH

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

