

## **2007 Special Olympics World Games – Shanghai, China**

The Special Olympics World Summer Games in Shanghai (2-11, October 2007) will be the largest single sporting event in 2007. The enormity of the Games – more than 7,500 Special Olympics athletes and their families from 165 countries; tens of thousands of coaches, volunteers and Chinese citizens; competitions in 25 Olympic-type sports at more than 20 venues – will command worldwide attention.

The Government of China views these games as extremely important and a significant opportunity to both demonstrate their leadership on a key development issue, their efforts in developing a harmonious society and as a preview for the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, China. President Hu Jintao will officiate at these Opening Ceremonies on 2 October. And one billion Chinese people alone are expected to view them.

For ten days, leaders in government, business, sports and education, as well as celebrities from around the world will converge in Shanghai to not only witness athletic skills and determination on the field of competition but also share in the celebration and gifts of people with intellectual disabilities. Key events beyond sporting competition include:

### **Final Leg of the Law Enforcement Torch Run, Various Locations (25 September – 1 October)**

Joined by an international team of Law Enforcement officers and 12 Special Olympics athletes the final leg of the Torch Run passes through 10 cities in China en route to the October 2<sup>nd</sup> Opening Ceremony.

### **Special Olympics Host Town Program, Various Locations (28 September – 1 October)**

International Special Olympics athletes receive a warm welcome from Shanghai's 19 districts and 10 other Chinese cities as they join together to host 165 international delegations.

### **Opening Ceremony of the 2007 Special Olympics World Summer Games (2 October)**

President Hu Jintao and other world leaders, celebrities and dignitaries celebrate the athletes of Special Olympics at the spectacular Opening Ceremony produced by award-winning Don Mischer Productions, and featuring top musical artists from around the world.

### **Special Olympics Sports Experience (throughout Games)**

Throughout the Games, Special Olympics athletes will be challenging the public to test their athletic skills in a variety of sports. This is an opportunity to meet the athletes, hear their stories, and witness their courage, skill, and determination.

### **Global Policy Summit on the Well-being of People with Intellectual Disabilities (3 October)**

An important exchange of ideas, as leaders from government, academia, health care, disability, business, philanthropy and sport discuss the challenges and opportunities for full inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in today's society. The Summit will conclude with **a call to action** in the form of a "Statement of Support" proclamation that calls upon leaders to address the needs of people with intellectual disabilities and to support the ideals of the Special Olympics movement.

### **Special Olympics Healthy Athletes, Jiangwan Stadium (2 – 10 October)**

Observe first hand as an international team of doctors provides a brighter future for Special Olympics athletes through health screenings and learn about the enormous health challenges facing this special community around the globe.

### **Global Family Leadership Forum (4 October)**

Families of Special Olympics athletes from around the world join host internationally known journalist Yang Lan and inspirational special guests to talk straightforwardly about raising a child—or living with another loved one—who has an intellectual disability.

### **Special Olympics Young Athletes Demonstration (4 October and 9 October)**

Learn about the latest developments in innovative sports programming for children with intellectual disabilities. Designed for youth ages 2 through 7, the Young Athletes program introduces children and their families to the world of sports while strengthening physical development and self-esteem.

### **Global Youth Forum (5 October)**

Youth with and without intellectual disabilities join a spirited discussion examining the issues of acceptance and inclusion they face in today's society. The discussion will be broadcast throughout China and in select countries around the world.

### **Closing Ceremony (11 October)**

The Games' final festivities, where the athletes, families, coaches, volunteers and other supporters come together one last time to celebrate their achievements, enjoy a world-class entertainment show and reflect on the many magical moments of the Games, from the playing fields to the communities throughout 11 days of sports, friendship and spirit!

## **Status of Intellectual Disabilities: The Challenge**

It is estimated that 193 million people, or 3 percent of the world's population, are individuals with intellectual disabilities – the largest of all disability groups. The occurrence of intellectual disabilities knows no boundaries; it cuts across lines of race, ethnicity, education level, social class, and economic background.

Although this population exists in every community, it is nearly invisible and is considered one of the most neglected segments of society worldwide. At best, people with intellectual disabilities fall well below the social average in areas of education, health, and employment and they face an uphill battle for independence and for social and occupational integration. At worst, they lead lives of rejection, abuse, and exclusion. In some countries even today, people with intellectual disabilities are warehoused in institutions where they are caged like animals, discarded by society, and forgotten by virtually everyone, living in a nightmare of physical and emotional pain.

Even in countries where laws protect the human rights of people with intellectual disabilities, this population still face tremendous disparities. For example, people with intellectual disabilities experience poorer health status than the general public and they possess high rates of undetected health problems. At the 2003 Special Olympics World Summer Games in Dublin, Ireland, 30% of the athletes participating in health screenings failed hearing tests, 35% had obvious signs of tooth decay, 20% were osteoporotic or osteopenic, and 53% were overweight or obese. What is perhaps most disturbing is that these health disparities are mirrored in almost every aspect of their lives.

One of the greatest barriers to the full inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities lies in the attitudes and actions of the general public. Groundbreaking attitude research conducted in 12 countries shows that the public generally has low expectations about the potential of people with intellectual disabilities and holds negative views toward their full integration in school and work.

These attitudes can only hinder further advancement in all areas including employment and social inclusion leaving people with intellectual disabilities further isolated and excluded.

Today, Special Olympics is meeting the challenge for 2.6 million athletes globally. However, this number represents just over 1% percent of the population of persons with intellectual disabilities in the world. We know that there are significantly underserved geographic areas and demographic segments of the population with intellectual disabilities. We are committed to growing our movement to 3 million athletes by 2010, with over 75% of athletes living outside North America.

Special Olympics will continue to draw on the strength of our athletes themselves to meet this challenge. Every day they face far more difficult obstacles with courage, conviction, and joy. We can do no less as their advocates and their friends.

### **Special Olympics Global Growth**

Four decades ago, Eunice Kennedy Shriver launched Special Olympics to provide sports training and athletic competition opportunities in a variety of Olympic-style sports for people with intellectual disabilities. Over the years, the organization achieved dramatic expansion around the world, development and implementation of new initiatives and recognition of Special Olympics' contributions by political, business, and advocacy leaders in all corners of the globe. Today, Special Olympics stands as a leading global advocate for people with intellectual disabilities.

Rapid growth during 2000-2005 effectively doubled the number of athletes participating in Special Olympics from 1 million in the year 2000 to over 2.25 million in 2005. Over 75% of Special Olympics athletes come from outside of North America and up to 65% live in the developing world. The level of programming in developing nations has increased substantially following establishment of the seven Regional offices (Cairo, Johannesburg, Washington, DC, Brussels, Panamá City, Delhi and Beijing). Special Olympics has made great strides in building and growing national Programs in the developing world, including: India, Brazil, Afghanistan, China, and Kenya.

Sports programming remains at the core of the mission of Special Olympics. Yet, accumulated research and anecdotal evidence indicate that through sport and related programs, Special Olympics provides a much wider range of services impacting the lives of individuals and communities in 160 countries. Special Olympics offers health screening programs, elementary to secondary school curricula, family support services, youth activation models, sports training and competition opportunities for people with and without intellectual disabilities, training sessions, and more. Special Olympics has become capable of identifying and rectifying gaps in societal attitudes, education, health care, employment and a range of other sectors.

### **Special Olympics – Transforming Lives and Building Communities**

Special Olympics is both stunningly global and resolutely grassroots. Because of Special Olympics, 2.6 million people with intellectual disabilities all over the world are *athletes*. Instead of experiencing the misperceptions and exclusion that still exist in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, they experience achievement, joy and acceptance. They acquire skills not only for sports, but for life.

And when people see how extraordinary these athletes are, their own attitudes and lives are transformed. It happens day after day in more than 200 Special Olympics Programs all over the globe, and at state, national and regional competitions. It has happened at 11 World Summer Games and eight World Winter Games—events enormous in scope and deep in significance. But even more so, it is happening every day in communities around the globe with over 25,000 local competitions taking place annually.

Special Olympics touches countless people in countless ways, and its impact reaches far beyond the sphere of sports. Coaches, trainers and volunteers step forward from their communities to help the athletes. Family members participate, becoming active members of both an immediate community and a vastly extended one. Spectators at events, students at schools that support Special Olympics and many other community members respond to the message and the energy of Special Olympics. Through a variety of initiatives—such as *Unified Sports*®, which joins persons with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team; the *Family Support Network*, which helps parents and families organize to address community needs and concerns; *Athlete Leadership*, where athletes are trained and given a voice; *Youth Outreach*, a program to educate and engage today's youth which includes *SO Get Into It* school curriculum and Youth Summits for athletes and non-disabled youth to discuss issues of inclusion and acceptance; and *Healthy Athletes*®, through which volunteer clinicians provide basic health screenings—Special Olympics brings people together.

By involving such a diverse range of individuals and groups, Special Olympics can pave the way for numerous types of community-based development—education, health, hunger, nutrition, clean water, micro-finance and more. And by reaching across an array of actual and perceived boundaries—geographic borders, religion, race, age, gender, economic status and cultures—Special Olympics serves as a catalytic force for communities, promoting inclusion, volunteerism, broad citizen engagement and the human dignity of all people. This power to connect people and promote acceptance of differences – whether ethnic, religious, tribal, or intellectual -- is a precondition for security and peace from Cheyenne to Shanghai, and attracts both Soccer Moms and Foreign Ministers.

Special Olympics also stands as a leader in the field of intellectual disability, making enormous strides in the areas of health, education, family support, research and policy change. The first ever *Global Policy Summit on the Well Being of People with Intellectual Disabilities* will take place at the 2007 Games bringing together leaders in government, education, health and sport to discuss issues and challenges facing this population. And, Special Olympics is consistently in the vanguard of services to persons with intellectual disabilities—for example, it has launched *Young Athletes*™ for to serve children ages 2 through 7, teaching them skills and preparing them for full Special Olympics eligibility at age 8. Through such leadership, Special Olympics continually demonstrates that its mission is not just "nice" but critical, that it goes beyond providing persons with intellectual disabilities with a life-changing experience through sports, it also provides a world-changing experience, and a unique development vehicle, for entire communities, that tears down the barriers that divide us, and creates connections that inspire us.

## Special Olympics in China

The history of Special Olympics involvement in China dates back nearly 25 years. As early as 1983, representatives of the global Special Olympics Movement traveled to China to meet with government officials and explore the possibility of creating a national Special Olympics Program. By 1985, Special Olympics China had officially entered the Special Olympics Movement and had sent two representatives to the Special Olympics World Winter Games in Utah, USA.

Today, China has more than 600,000 Special Olympics athletes, Special Olympics programs in 31 provinces, cities and towns, and a national plan to establish 60,00 training centers for volunteers all over China by 2010. This enormous growth is attributable to a strong commitment and financial investment by the government to people with intellectual disabilities. These numbers do not include the thousands of citizens that are being engaged and educated through various Special Olympics initiatives:

- Over 53,000 people are volunteering for Special Olympics in a variety of capacities so that we can serve more athletes, a emerging concept for China
- 35,500 coaches have been trained and are bring sports training and competition to the athletes in their local communities
- Nearly 8500 families are registered and over 500 family members trained as family messenger as part of our *Family Support Network*.
- *Healthy Athletes* Screenings and Medfest have been conducted on thousands of Chinese athletes and doctors and health providers have been trained; volunteering their time and services.
- Special Olympics Official Program for Athletes (SOOPA), providing people with intellectual disabilities an opportunity to become certified sports officials through a mentor training program has been introduced.
- Special Olympics *SO Get Into It* curriculum officially endorsed by government and adopted by over ten cities including Beijing, Xian, and Shanghai. Special schools are partnering with mainstream schools
- Special Olympics *Unified Sports* initiative has been among the most successful with over 70,000 participants. Many special education schools throughout China have used Unified Sports as a means of improving awareness of people with mental disabilities.
- Created “Special Olympics e-home” volunteer program where families agreed to participate in five outings with Special Olympics athletes and their families in order to gain a better understanding of people with intellectual disabilities.

Beyond Special Olympics specific activities changes can be seen in China as it relates to treatment of people with intellectual disability and citizen engagement:

- Established Sunshine Home program, a community-based center for people with intellectual disabilities, where students are taught lessons on basic life skills, train in Olympic-type sports and rehabilitation exercises. Today, 240 Sunshine Homes are in Shanghai with expansion plans for 11 other cities in China.
- China's first national medical and legal centers devoted to intellectual disability have been launched
- New curricular materials focused on diversity, tolerance, and integration have been developed, and a national campaign is underway to raise public consciousness.
- Renovated 30 sports venues making the facilities more accessible to the disabled.
- Provided special training courses on intellectual disabilities to hotel managers and tourism officials and set up dedicated taxis stands to assist with traffic during the World Summer Games in Shanghai.
- Sino-American team of social scientists has done unprecedented research on popular attitudes toward the intellectually disabled.
- The Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (SASS) conducted a survey of 4,000 middle school youth in China to assess their knowledge of intellectual disabilities and their attitudes and intent toward young people with an intellectual disability.
- Inclusive kindergarten is emerging in Shanghai city schools.