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Message from an athlete

Ronny Jones, Special Olympics Arizona gold medal athlete
Dearest students, parents, teachers, and coaches:

Thank you for taking a moment to learn more about Special Olympics Arizona and its tremendous impact! Special Olympics has changed me in a great way. I was a shy person and did not know how to work with different people very well. After I attended my first competitive event, horseback, in 1996, I was hooked on Special Olympics! I practiced using clear speech to command my horse, I built up my muscles by brushing my horse, and I became less shy. As my confidence grew, talking with other people became easier. I started to make more friends and have an easier time participating on teams. I later joined numerous other sports including basketball, swimming, soccer, golf, softball, track & field, cheer, floor hockey, and flag football.

Of course, I love playing sports but I also love playing music! Thanks to Special Olympics Arizona, I am given the opportunity to learn how to play the ukulele with my friends, compete in Unified Arts contests with my teammates, build robots, join esports, and more! Special Olympics Arizona has provided new, innovative programs through the arts that captures the interests of our athletes beyond sports. I encourage you to read through this guidebook and find opportunities for your school and teams to join the inclusion revolution one arts project at a time!

Sincerely,
Ronny Jones
Unified Ukuleles

People of all ages and abilities can receive a free Unified Ukulele bundle which includes a custom Tanglewood concert ukulele with Aquila colored strings and a matching method book for adaptive play & learning designed by Guitars in the Classroom, an electric tuner, capo, padded gig bag, and a special SOAZ decal you can throw on your uke! Ready to #PlayUnified music?

Learn to play and teach Unified Ukes in-person or virtually!
Unified Robotics

Unified Robotics is an inclusive STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) program that provides high schools with training and resources for collaborative opportunities for individuals with and without intellectual disabilities to explore the STEM-oriented field of robotics!
Unified Photography

Unified Photography provides inclusive experiences and interactions that engage students on campus and families in the communities through photography and videography tutorials, trainings, and tips that provide necessary support for people of all abilities to showcase their talents by capturing special moments through your own lens.
Unified Gardening

Unified Gardening provides schools, community delegations, and families the opportunity to get engaged and feel supported to learn more about gardening, how to grow healthy foods, and even have a chance to learn about recycling and healthy recipes that are easy to make!
Unified Arts Projects

Unified Arts projects are held throughout the year for people of all ages, abilities, and artistic knowledge. Help SOAZ by designing a mural for the new SOAZ office, create greeting cards, share your at-home crafts, and more! Follow @SOAZconnected on Facebook for more information on Unified Arts and how your school and/or community delegation can join our virtual arts, projects!
Did you know...

Nearly 700 SOAZ athletes & Unified partners from over 60 Unified Champion Schools and community delegations participate in Unified Arts statewide.

New brain research shows that not only does music improve skills in math and reading, but it promotes creativity, social development, personality adjustment, and self-worth.

Multiple studies have concluded that curricular and extracurricular art studies and activities help keep high-risk dropout students stay in school core academic subject.

88% of people with intellectual disabilities stated they would be “very likely” or “likely” to be more involved in the arts if barriers like transportation, costs, and access were removed.


I have been involved with Special Olympics for many years and one of my favorite parts is meeting new people and making new friends. I remember getting to hold a guitar for the first time at a Special Olympics Arizona Unified Arts event and I felt so empowered and capable. I love music and I can’t wait to play music with you one day!

Paul B.

I had a bunch of friends who were interested in participating in Special Olympics but were not interested in sports. Through Unified Arts, I was able to get more students on campus engaged, including students from arts and theater clubs. These students were being excluded but now, because of Unified Arts, my whole school is involved and we can all express ourselves in an inclusive, fun way!

Brianne K.
special thanks to our unified arts partners who help make arts accessible for all!
COLOR ME IN!
"GO TEAM!"
"I GOT THIS!"
COLOR IN THE ATHLETE OATH!

Let me win but
if I cannot win
let me be brave
in the attempt.
THE SOUND OF INCLUSION
WAY TO GO!