

***Special
Olympics***
Arizona



2024 ANNUAL REPORT





The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills, and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes, and the community.



Dear Friends:

Special Olympics Arizona is a resilient organization that has risen to the challenge the last two years to continue to serve individuals with intellectual disabilities in Arizona. We are proud to have served over 18,500 athletes and partners in 22 different sports. Many things have changed to get us to this point and will continue to change but one aspect that won't change is what drives us to continue to build this community up to ensure inclusion for all.

In 2007, I was first given the opportunity to work with an off-season bowling league for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Feeling nervous would have been an understatement. Yet, as I sat down to collect money and provide lane assignments, I felt like I was home. For the first time I found a group of people with so much skill, joy, and love that I instantly felt a part of their community. I wasn't judged on first impression because of my disability but on the friendship I was willing to offer. From that day forward I have had a love for the mission and a drive to see the organization become bigger and better so all individuals across Arizona with an intellectual disability have a place to feel at home too. I attribute my unwavering support to "my why" for being a part of this truly amazing movement. What is your why?

I hope you take this opportunity today to share your why to spread the inclusive movement and if you haven't found your why yet that you might be able to find a little piece of that here.

For too long individuals with intellectual disabilities have been hidden away in the corners of society with little connection to the outside world. Until that changes in every classroom and community across Arizona our mission is not done.

Sincerely,

Jamie Heckerman
President & CEO

**Special
Olympics**
Arizona



2024 Board of Directors

Board Officers

Greg Geist | *Board Chair* | BMO Harris Bank N.A., Managing Director & Market Executive, Commercial Banking

Jeremiah Foster | *Finance Committee Chair* | Resolute, Principal/Founder

Ben Goetter | *Governance Committee Chair* | Mortensen, Vice President, General Manager, Phoenix

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Will Irvine | Ingram Micro, Sales Executive

Trisha Larson | Morgan Stanley, Financial Advisor

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Janina Sheedy | Mayo Clinic, Physician Assistant

Casey Strunk | Strunk Insurance Group, Inc., Owner

Dr. Rena Szabo | Banner Medical Group, Psychology Director (*Former*)

DeMario Vaughn | Mercy Care, Manager, Community Relations

Mark Witthar | Sanderson Ford, General Manager



Gold Level Sponsors



Molly Blank Fund



**ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION**



93% of Every Dollar Goes Directly Back to Programs

JANUARY

- Floorball, Tennis, Snow-related sports

FEBRUARY

- Basketball & Cheer
- WMPO
- Sun Games
- Super Bowl LVIII

MARCH

- Guardian Games
- State Basketball & Cheer
- UCS Leadership Summit

APRIL

- Flag Football, Track and Field, Volleyball
- Summer Games

MAY

- Track and Field, Volleyball, Weight Lifting

JUNE

- Esports
- World Games
- Top Golf



JULY

- Esports
- Top Golf
- Pairs Olympics

AUGUST

- Top Golf
- Swimming

SEPTEMBER

- Bare Aspen Wine & Beer Tasting
- Swimming, Bocce, Badminton

OCTOBER

- All-In Night
- Fall Games
- Swimming, Bocce

NOVEMBER

- Golf, Softball, Bowling
- Over the Edge

DECEMBER

- State Golf
- State Softball
- Soccer



2024 was a successful year for Special Olympics Arizona. SOAZ hosted 200+ competitions throughout the year across the entire state! It would not have been a success without the support of the community!



Program Overviews

Sports: Special Olympics Arizona offers sport through three programs: Traditional Sports, Unified Sports, and AIA Unified Sports

- 22 sports offered
- 200+ competitions each year

Unified Champion Schools: A school-based program to promote inclusion

- 162 Schools Across the State
- 26 active national banner schools
- 2 schools received National Banner Recognition

Esports: Promoting teamwork, social, and critical thinking skills through competitive online gaming

- 300+ participants in esports competitions



Program Overviews

Inclusive Health: Basic health, wellness, and education for persons with ID. Works to improve access to quality healthcare

- Healthy Athletes: 1,163 health screenings in multiple disciplines
- Healthy LEAP: 1,214 athletes & partners / 29 teachers & coaches
- Health Education Events: Approximately 440 participants
- Health Students & Health Professionals Engaged outside of HA: 302

Athlete Leadership: Inclusive leadership opportunities that give SOAZ athletes the confidence and platform to share their voice

- 47 Athlete Leaders throughout AZ
- 1 Athlete Leader as a voting member on the SOAZ Board of Directors
- 330 hours volunteered by Athlete Leaders
- 6 different roles that SOAZ offers Athlete Leaders



HOW FUNDS ARE UTILIZED

FROM SPONSORSHIPS AND INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS

- Special Olympics Arizona never charges an athlete to participate in all SOAZ sports programming
- Enhance athlete experience at state competitions
- Cover cost of athletes participating in non-sports programming
- Provide training for athletes participating in athlete leadership
- Provide health screenings for athletes across the state
- Improving technology to enhance communication and training for coaches and volunteers
- Support staff members in increasing athlete recruitment and engagement
- Provide healthy meals for athletes, Unified Partners, and coaches at statewide competitions
- Provide support for special events and community outreach opportunities



AREAS

6

SPORTS

22

COMPETITIONS

200+

VOLUNTEERS

24,743

COACHES

1,148

ATHLETES
& UNIFIED
PARTNERS

18,581

SOAZ STATS

93% of Every Dollar Goes Directly Back to Programs



LAW ENFORCEMENT TORCH RUN

In 2024, more than 60 law enforcement agencies across Arizona raised over 1.15 million dollars for Arizona's Special Olympics and contributed more than 12,000 volunteer hours! Arizona law enforcement professionals are true "Guardians of the Flame"!

Torch Runs are the heart and soul of the LETR movement. Several agencies are involved with fun and exciting fundraising efforts in their communities, but even more participate in carrying the Torch who's flame is known as the "Flame of Hope," symbolizing courage and inclusion. Torch Runs promote awareness in their community and raise funds through Torch Run Shirts sales and traditional donations that are generated by law enforcement volunteers.



LAW ENFORCEMENT TORCH RUN



The LETR program hosts many events each year to promote the SOAZ message of inclusion while raising critical funds.

- Sanderson Ford's Guardian Games
- Fry's Fuel of Dreams
- Over The Edge
- Bearcat Pulls in Sierra Vista and Lake Havasu City
- Department of Corrections Inmate Fundraising Campaigns
- Scary and Safe Halloween Festival in Yuma
- Heroes Softball Tournament in Peoria
- Polar Plunge in Scottsdale
- Tip A Cop events in Tucson
- So Many More!

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

BY THE DATES

- February 6, 2024: The WMPO Putting Challenge
- March 16, 2024: Polar Plunge
- March 22, 2024: Guardian Games
- April 4, 2024: Coca-Cola Sun Games
- Law Enforcement Torch Runs were hosted throughout April and May of 2024
- August 15, 2024: Bowl-a-thon Bash
- September 14, 2024: Bare Aspen Wine and Beer Tasting
- October 3, 2024: All-INclusive Night
- Breakfast With Champions were hosted in the Fall!
 - October 25, 2024: Tucson BWC
 - November 15, 2024: Yuma BWC
 - December 8, 2024: Kingman BWC
- November 16, 2024: Over The Edge
- December 14/15, 2024: Hot Chocolate Run
- December 28, 2024: Fiesta Bowl Charities Player Outreach Football Clinic with SOAZ Athletes
- And More!

Breakfast With Champions

- SOAZ's premier fundraising event each year with celebrations in Tucson, Yuma, & Kingman
- Event includes breakfast, videos, and athlete, coach, Unified partner, and LETR speakers!
- BWC is an inspirational event that celebrates the athletes and brings the community together

All-INclusive Night

- SOAZ's inaugural All-INclusive Night was hosted at Footprint Center, featuring a silent and live auction, inclusive activities, a program featuring awards, a Unified basketball game, and a Unified dance performance on the court. There was even an after party hosted in one of the arena's exclusive clubs!

Over the Edge

- SOAZ athletes show courage and fearlessness everyday. Over the Edge allows participants to follow the lead of athletes and face their fears and show courage by rappelling down a 27-story building

Guardian Games

- SOAZ athletes, Law Enforcement officers, and community members come together to compete in a day full of games, activities, and inclusion!

Polar Plunge

- Peer-to-Peer fundraiser for delegations to raise money

Bare Aspen

- Wine, beer, and food tasting fundraiser to raise funds for SOAZ programs

LETR

- Statewide law enforcement agency initiative to increase awareness and funds that benefit SOAZ

Sun Games

- SOAZ athletes and community members come together to compete in a day full of games, activities, and inclusion!



VOLUNTEER WITH SPECIAL OLYMPICS ARIZONA

Volunteers are vital to ensuring our competitions run smoothly. Check out our event schedule for opportunities to volunteer as an individual, with your family and friends, or as a corporate group.

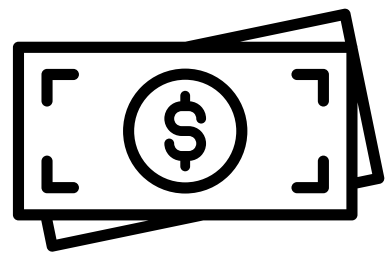
Visit Specialolympicsarizona.org/volunteer/ to learn more. For questions or more information contact Volunteer@SOAZ.org



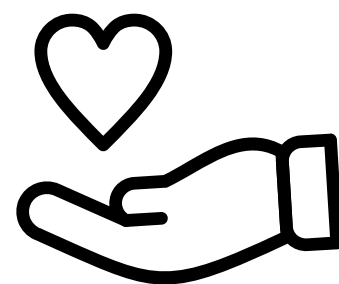
**SOAZ had 14,052
volunteers in 2024! Join
the SOAZ volunteer
community today to
increase your impact!**



Ways to Engage with Special Olympics Arizona



CASH GIFTS



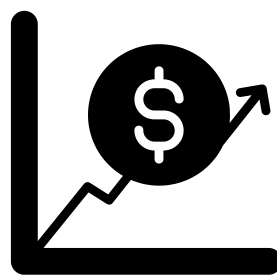
VOLUNTEER



SPONSORSHIPS



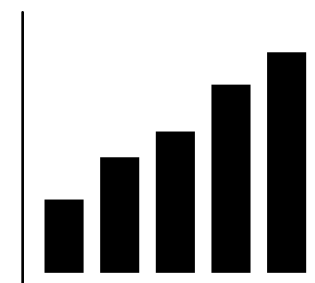
PLANNED GIVING



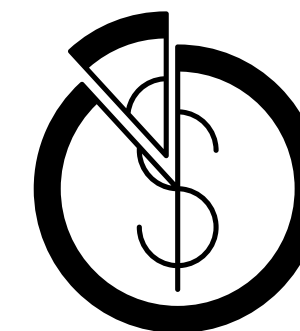
STOCKS



MATCHING GIFTS



SECURITIES



PAYROLL
DEDUCTIONS

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

