



Special Olympics Young Athletes™

Michigan

23,033 athletes
2,526 Young Athletes

24 sports offered

6 state-level competitions, district basketball tournaments and more than 400 competitions statewide.

Year-round sports training and competitions

20,000 volunteers

Programs provided at no cost to athletes or their families

Budget funded almost entirely by private donations

Sports include:

Alpine Skiing
Athletics
Basketball
Bocce
Bowling
Cross-Country Skiing
Cycling
Figure Skating
Flag Football
Golf
Gymnastics (Artistic & Rhythmic)
Horseshoes
Kayaking
Poly Hockey
Powerlifting
Soccer
Snowboarding
Snowshoeing
Softball
Speed Skating
Swimming
Volleyball
Weightlifting
*Plus: Unified Sports®
Unified Champion Schools
Healthy Athletes® Program
Young Athletes™
Motor Activities Training Program

Overview

- Young Athletes™ is a program designed for children ages two through seven with intellectual disabilities to help improve physical, cognitive and social skills through introduction to sports. Young Athletes™ provides the opportunity for children to get involved before the age of eight, when they are eligible to compete for Special Olympics Michigan.
- The activities the athletes take part in are foundational skills consisting of walking, running, balance, jumping, catching, throwing, striking, kicking and other activities.
- The program focuses on two specific levels of play. Level One includes physical activities focused on developing fundamental motor tracking and eye-hand coordination. Level Two concentrates on the application of these physical activities sharpened through play at Level One.

History of the program

- In early 2007, Special Olympics created a pilot of the program aimed to get younger children involved with Special Olympics.
- Young Athletes™ made its debut in Shanghai, China during the 2007 Special Olympics World Summer Games.
- To date, Young Athletes™ has reached over 100,000 children in 21 countries and is continuing to expand.

Benefits

- In addition to the physical aspect of the program, it allows the children to interact with other athletes who may have intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities or some children without disabilities.
- Young Athletes™ provides families with the resources and support available through Special Olympics Michigan. Another benefit of the program is it provides an opportunity for parents to share information and resources with one another about raising a child with disabilities.

Why it is important

- Young Athletes™ is a program that emphasizes fun, no matter the athletes' athletic ability.
- Each athlete learns the importance of teamwork and builds self-confidence with each activity they accomplish.
- Additionally, the children learn how to take directions, which is beneficial if the athlete decides to enter Special Olympics Michigan.
- Involvement in Young Athletes™ makes the transition easier on the athlete because they are more familiar with interacting with other athletes.
- Young Athletes™ embraces each child's differences and emphasizes it's okay to be different.

Funding

- Special Olympics Michigan is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization supported almost entirely through corporate funding, individual gifts, and special events. All Special Olympics Michigan programs and activities are available at no cost to Michigan athletes or their families. The generosity of Michigan organizations, individuals, and statewide businesses enable the program to continue.

For more information, contact us through our website at www.somi.org, by phone at (800) 644-6404 or by mail to Special Olympics Michigan, Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan 48859

