Special Olympics’ Young Athletes

“Outside the Clinic / Outside the Box”
Sports-based Development Models
for those with IDD and their families
Community-based Partnership in Action

Together -- hospitals, Clinics, NGO’s, Service Orgs, Corporations, Practitioners, Sponsors, Foundations, Corporations, Universities, etc – can achieve **remarkable health outcomes** in the face of gross injustice.
But challenges are broad and chronic

Start from early childhood…

- Early developmental programs don’t address complex interplay of social, physical, intellectual, and emotional health and well-being
- Pre-schools / child care providers lack training and information needed to make legally required accommodations
- Parents seldom given a sense of hope for their child’s potential

… and continue to be manifested across a range of public / public health issues throughout their lifetime.

- Obesity
- Lack of physical activity
- Poor nutrition
- Underemployment
- Isolation
- Depression
Early Childhood Development

Special Olympics “Young Athletes”: A proven, high-impact early childhood sports-skills development program that delivers significant gains in not only physical, but social, emotional, creative and cognitive development.
Significant gains through structured play

Children with ID develop physical sport skills, gain better social skills, enhance their self-esteem and bond with peers, parents and others.

“Children in the YA intervention group gained on average 7 months on the age equivalent scales, compared to average gains of 3 months for children in the control group on the object manipulation and locomotion subscale of the PDMS. Simply stated, the motor skills of young children participating in YA improved at twice the rate of children in the control group who did not participate in YA.”

“Children in the YA intervention group gained almost 9 months on the PDMS Stationary subscale compared to gains of 5 months for the children in the control group. It is notable that these positive results were found in children who had varying disabilities such as Developmental Delays, Autism Spectrum Disorder and Intellectual Disabilities.”

Significant gains through structured play

**Teachers** reported improvements in **Young Athlete** participants’:
- Social skills (84%)
- Motor skills (82%)
- Communication (78%)
- Cognitive ability (75%)
- Adaptive behavior (72%)

**Parents** reported these same improvements and that **Young Athletes**:
- Raised their expectations for their child
- Providing a network of other families
- Gave them a normative experience -- watching their children participate in an age appropriate sports skill development program.
Fostering a lifestyle rooted in fitness, athletic activity, health and nutrition

Special Olympics “T.R.A.I.N” and Health Promotion: informing lifestyle choices that include healthy eating, individually tailored sports training and competition, obesity prevention, smoking cessation, sanitation, etc.
Fostering a lifestyle rooted in fitness, athletic activity, health and nutrition

“Positive psychosocial and health benefits emerged across the [demonstration] sites. The evaluation showed successes across different domains, including:

- improved perceived health
- reduction in body weight
- improved self-confidence
- enhanced attitudes toward physical activity
- increased fiber intake, and
- decreased barriers.

Additionally, findings showed significant changes in upper body and lower body muscle strength and endurance and aerobic fitness.”

- Health Promotion Pilot Evaluation report conducted by the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Aging with Developmental Disabilities and the Department of Disability and Human Development, University of Illinois at Chicago
Combating isolation and stigma through competition and camaraderie

Special Olympics “Unified Sports”: unifying people with and without intellectual disabilities as teammates and competitors on the field of play, turning fear and stigma into new found respect and lasting friendships.
Combating isolation and stigma through competition and camaraderie

UNIFIED SPORTS IMPACT

Reported Significant Change in Self-esteem/Self-Confidence

ATHLETES WITH ID: 64%
ATHLETES WITHOUT ID: 37%

Reported Significant Change in Social skills

ATHLETES WITH ID: 47%
ATHLETES WITHOUT ID: 65%

Reported At Least Some Change in Self-Esteem and Social Skills

ATHLETES WITH ID: 99%
ATHLETES WITHOUT ID: 96%
Molly and Kerry Hincka

(Click to play)