

**2019 World Games Abu Dhabi
Special Olympics USA Delegation
from Massachusetts**



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Interview Policy for Special Olympics Athletes

Special Olympics Massachusetts athletes and their families are typically happy to help spread the mission of the organization by participating in interviews with various media outlets. We ask that all requests to contact/interview members of the 2019 World Games delegation be submitted to Charles Hirsch, Director of Brand and Marketing. Additionally, photo and video assets may be requested by emailing charles.hirsch@specialolympicsma.org.

Press Releases

Special Olympics Massachusetts routinely sends out press releases with information highlighting local events, athlete and coaches' accomplishments, and general organizational updates. To be added to the media distribution list, please email charles.hirsch@specialolympicsma.org.

Media Guide:

This Special Olympics World Games media guide was written, edited and compiled by Charles Hirsch & Catherine Twing

Special Olympics Massachusetts Organizational Information

Mission statement

To provide year-round sports training and competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for all children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, prepare for entry into school and community programs, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in the sharing of gifts, skills and friendships with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

About Special Olympics Massachusetts

Special Olympics Massachusetts is a nonprofit organization helping to change the world through sport. Since 1968, Special Olympics has provided athletic training and competition for millions of athletes with intellectual disabilities throughout the world. In 1970, Special Olympics Massachusetts was founded to focus on providing these opportunities in the commonwealth.

In Massachusetts, there are currently over 12,500 athletes with intellectual disabilities who participate in Special Olympics sports each year. Those athletes are supported by over 11,500 volunteers, including over 1,200 coaches. In 2017, 296 competitions – across 23 sports – were held, including season ending tournaments: Winter Games (March), Summer Games (June), Tournament of Champions (August), and the State Soccer Cup and Flag Football Championships (November).

In addition to the traditional sports model designed for athletes with intellectual disabilities, Special Olympics Massachusetts is proud to have been an innovator of Unified Sports in the mid-1980s. Unified Sports is a model in which athletes with and without disabilities compete on the same team at the same time. This inclusive sports programming has provided countless opportunities for people to connect with each other through the power of sports. It has transformed school and local Special Olympics programs into inclusive communities, working together to support each other on and off the playing field.

Special Olympics Massachusetts is an accredited program of Special Olympics Inc.
www.specialolympics.org

Special Olympics Massachusetts Social Media:

Facebook: [Facebook.com/SpecialOlympicsMassachusetts](https://www.facebook.com/SpecialOlympicsMassachusetts)

Twitter: [@spolympicsma](https://twitter.com/spolympicsma)

Instagram: [@specialolympicsma](https://www.instagram.com/specialolympicsma)

About Special Olympics International

Special Olympics is a global movement that unleashes the human spirit through the transformative power and joy of sports, every day around the world. We empower people with intellectual disabilities to become accepted and valued members of their communities, which leads to a more respectful and inclusive society for all. Using sports as the catalyst and programming around health and education, Special Olympics is fighting inactivity, injustice and intolerance. Founded in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, the Special Olympics movement has grown to more than 5 million athletes in 174 countries. With the support of more than 1.4 million coaches and volunteers, Special Olympics delivers 32 Olympic-type sports and nearly 103,000 games and competitions throughout the year. Special Olympics is supported by individuals, foundations and partners, including the Christmas Records Trust, the Law Enforcement Torch Run® for Special Olympics, The Coca-Cola Company, The Walt Disney Company and ESPN, Microsoft, Lions Clubs International, Mattel, P&G, Bank of America, Essilor Vision Foundation, the Golisano Foundation, Finish Line, and Safilo Group. Visit Special Olympics at <http://www.specialolympics.org>. Engage with us on Twitter: [@specialolympics](https://twitter.com/specialolympics), Facebook: facebook.com/specialolympics, YouTube: youtube.com/specialolympicshq, Instagram: instagram.com/specialolympics and our blog: specialolympicsblog.wordpress.com.

About Unified Sports

Special Olympics Massachusetts is proud to have founded the Unified Sports program in 1984. Although the initiative began locally, today it is featured in over 120 countries globally through the international Special Olympics Movement.

Officially launched in 1989, Special Olympics Unified Sports has gained momentum over the last three decades due in large part to multiple partners and supporters who have facilitated the growth of the program, such as ESPN, the Department of Education, Kim Samuel and the Samuel Family Foundation, Lions Club International and many other sports leagues, companies and associations.

The Unified Sports competitive model combines Special Olympics athletes and partners as teammates on sport teams for training and competition. All athletes and partners on a Unified Sports competitive team must have attained the necessary sport-specific skills and tactics to compete and teams that participate in this model may be eligible for advancement to Regional and World Games. For the Unified Sports Player Development model, equal numbers of Special Olympics athletes and partners compete on the same team and are of similar age, but teammates are not required to be of similar abilities, and teammates of higher abilities serve as mentors to assist teammates of lower abilities.

Special Olympics 50th Anniversary

Since 1968, Special Olympics has been changing attitudes about the talents of people with intellectual disabilities. Since 1968, Special Olympics has been changing the world!

Beginning in 2017, Special Olympics Massachusetts celebrated this milestone with various tent pole events, the first of which was the 2017 Boston Marathon with Special Olympics athlete, Greg Schwartz leading the team presented by John Hancock. The 2018 Special Olympics USA Games team nodded symbolically to the accomplishments of the last fifty years with fifty athletes representing the Commonwealth in Seattle. These athletes will cement their legacy by committing to the highest level athletic training and competing against the very best in their sport.

Throughout this 50th anniversary celebration, Special Olympics Massachusetts has challenged people from all backgrounds to decide what they want their legacy to be. And then, just like Special Olympics athletes do every day, go out and make it happen. Choose to include: Help build a more welcoming and just community.

About Champions for 50 partnerships

In honor of the 50th anniversary of the Special Olympics movement, Special Olympics Massachusetts has highlighted 50 partnerships between Special Olympics athletes and community leaders as Champions for 50. These Champions include corporations, small businesses, individuals, and professional sports teams. Each Unified partnership works to strengthen their legacy of building a more inclusive community with a commitment to raise critical funds and increase awareness of Special Olympics' impact in the commonwealth.

On September 27, 2018 Special Olympics Massachusetts hosted the Champions for 50 Celebration at the JFK Presidential Library on Columbia Point in Boston. The evening featured performances by Ronan Tynan, and remarks by Tim Shriver, Chairman of Special Olympics International, Mary Beth McMahon, President and CEO of Special Olympics Massachusetts, Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker, Special Olympics athletes Tyler Lagasse and Melissa Riley. Each Champion for 50 community organization received a commemorative plaque to mark the occasion and show appreciation for their ongoing support of the Special Olympics movement.

More about Champions for 50: <https://www.specialolympicsma.org/champions-for-50/>

Special Olympics World Games 2019

About Special Olympics World Summer Games 2019

Special Olympics World Games Abu Dhabi will be the largest sports and humanitarian event in the world in 2019. From March 14 to 21, 7,500 athletes and 3,000 coaches representing more than 176 nations will participate in 24 officially sanctioned Olympic-style sports in venues throughout Abu Dhabi. The first ever Special Olympics World Games to be held in the Middle East and North Africa will also be the most unified Games in the 50-year history of the Special Olympics movement, with inclusion of people of determination with intellectual disabilities in every aspect of the event. Under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Special Olympics World Games Abu Dhabi 2019 is an integral part of local, national and regional plans to expand opportunities for people of determination in line with Abu Dhabi and the UAE's shared vision of a unified and inclusive society. For more information on Special Olympics World Games Abu Dhabi 2019, including volunteer and sponsorship opportunities, visit abuDhabi2019.org or follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

About the Special Olympics USA Delegation

Special Olympics USA is proud to announce that it will send a 300+ member delegation to represent the United States at the Special Olympics World Games Abu Dhabi 2019, being held March 14-21, 2019, in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. Special Olympics USA, is comprised of more than 200 athletes, 60+ coaches and approximately 34 delegation members who support team operations. Team members will compete in 18 of the 24 sports offered: athletics, basketball, bocce, bowling, cycling, equestrian, football (soccer), golf, gymnastics – artistic, gymnastics—rhythmic, open water swimming, powerlifting, sailing, swimming, table tennis, tennis, triathlon, and volleyball.

Special Olympics USA Media Contact:

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Media assets:

- [Special Olympics USA 2019 fact sheet](#)
- Special Olympics USA Website: <http://www.specialolympicsusa.org/2019/>
- Photos of delegation members from Massachusetts:
www.specialolympicsma.org/abudhabiphotos

Sponsors of Special Olympics USA:

- Bank of America
- Champion
- MTM Recognition

Law Enforcement Torch Run Final Leg

About the Final Leg

The purpose of the Torch Run is to raise awareness and funds for the Special Olympics movement, with the Flame becoming a powerful unifying symbol. No matter where it goes, it draws people together to celebrate our differences and our shared humanity.

This event first started at the site of the Pnyx in Athens, Greece. The Special Olympics "Flame of Hope" will be lit by the rays of the sun and relayed to the UAE and through all the Emirates by Special Olympics athletes and law enforcement officers, conveying a message of hope for a more unified world.

As retired Chief Richard LaMunyon once said, "What started in 1981...as a flicker of hope for Special Olympics has now become a roaring flame of stability for Special Olympics athletes worldwide." The Torch is changing the future for people with intellectual disabilities and lighting the way for acceptance and inclusion.

Participating Officer from Massachusetts

Officer Andy LaRose



Hometown: Worcester, MA

Department: Marlborough Police Department

Andy LaRose has been involved with the Massachusetts Law Enforcement Torch Run for the past six years. He has worked for the Marlborough Police Department for the last twenty years and was promoted to the Traffic Services Division in the winter of 2017.

Andy's wife Kate, introduced him to volunteering for individuals with intellectual disabilities. They have two children, Allison is six-years-old and Connor is five-years-old. They bring their children to LETR events to teach them the importance of acceptance and giving.

Andy runs several annual LETR fundraising events including the Marlborough Police Motorcycle Ride and Polar Plunge, which have raised over \$50,000. He also runs an annual unified basketball league with police officers and Special Olympics athletes. Andy was hooked from the start, and the more families he interacts with, the deeper his love for the LETR grows.

Delegation Members from Massachusetts

Athlete and Coach Roster

Basketball

Colin Davidson – Athlete



Hometown: Northborough, MA

Bio: Colin Davidson's life has been changed by Special Olympics in more ways than one. As a Global Messenger for over 15 years, and a competitor in basketball, soccer, athletics, golf, sailing and skiing, he has traveled around the world including to the World Games in Greece, where he met his wife Amanda, who is also a Special Olympics athlete. Amanda and Colin, who reside in Northborough, Massachusetts, recently celebrated their second wedding anniversary. Colin loves watching Boston sports and spending time with friends. He was inducted into the Special Olympics Massachusetts hall of fame in 2006.

Ryan Dixon – Athlete



Hometown: Shrewsbury, MA

Bio: Ryan Dixon of Shrewsbury, Massachusetts has been competing Special Olympics for nearly 25 years and volunteered at the 2015 World Games in Los Angeles where he cheered on his friends. He loves to play with his teammates in bocce, basketball, soccer and volleyball. He enjoys spending time with his friends and making new friends. Ryan traveled to Seattle, Washington for the 2018 Special Olympics USA Games in July where he danced with performer Allen Stone in the audience on national television.

Zachary Englehart – Athlete



Hometown: Worcester, MA

Bio: Zachary Englehart of Worcester first joined Special Olympics through the Shrewsbury Parks and Rec sports program when he was eight years old. He began by playing soccer, but soon added golf, basketball and track and field. Through Special Olympics he has made friends and learned how to compete on a team. He is proud of having graduated high school and works at Price Rite Grocery Store. He is so excited to be a part of something so big, and having the opportunity to meet other athletes from other states and around the world in Abu Dhabi.

Merrill Englehart – Coach



Hometown: Worcester, MA

Bio: Since 2005, Merrill Englehart of Worcester has been a coach and Special Olympics Unified partner in basketball and golf with Special Olympics Massachusetts. His son Zachary is a Special Olympics athlete and a member of the basketball team. This will be Merrill's first time coaching at a Special Olympics World Games Abu Dhabi 2019.

Joe Jamros – Athlete



Hometown: Shrewsbury, MA

Bio: Joe Jamros began competing with Special Olympics in 2005. While he is on the basketball team and enjoyed playing with his team in Seattle, his favorite sport is soccer. Joe also plays bocce, volleyball, and bowling. Special Olympics has helped Joe become more social and given him the chance to have new experiences. He is currently a student at the Assabet Valley Collaborative Evolution Program and works part time and volunteers at the libraries in

Shrewsbury (his hometown), Worcester and Grafton, Massachusetts. He is a huge New England sports fan and has season tickets to the New England Revolution Soccer team. In 2016 and 2017 he had the honor of being a member of the New England Revolution Unified Team. No matter the sport, Joe gives 110% and feels comfortable with Special Olympics because no one is being judgmental and everyone wants you to improve and succeed.

Matthew Millett – Athlete



Hometown: Spencer, MA

Bio: Matt Millett of Spencer, Massachusetts started participating in Special Olympics in 1998, and has competed in soccer, volleyball, basketball, softball. He works full-time as Institute Security Officer at Department of Youth Service. Matt also plays in adult soccer leagues with his friends and enjoys hiking and traveling. In 2010, he traveled to the World Cup to participate in Special Olympics' Unity Cup in Cape Town, South Africa. He has hiked Mount Whitney, the

highest point in the lower 48. Special Olympics has made Matthew more confident in his daily life, leading him to be more outgoing and try new things. Matt serves on the Special Olympics Massachusetts Board of Directors and is a member of the Special Olympics Global Athlete Congress.

Brian Mills – Athlete



Hometown: Northborough, MA

Bio: Brian Mills of Northborough, Massachusetts has competed in four USA Games including in 2010 and in 2018. He plays basketball, volleyball, golf and soccer. Special Olympics has given him more confidence in himself. Outside of sports, Brian has two jobs and helps out with his local chamber of commerce, Corridor Nine in Westborough, and his local Lions Club. He loves having fun with his teammates and is excited to travel to Abu Dhabi to compete.

William (Bill) O'Brien III – Coach



Hometown: Shrewsbury, MA

Bio: Bill O'Brien of Shrewsbury, Massachusetts has coached Special Olympics basketball and soccer for six years. His son Liam is often a member of his teams and is the reason Bill has been involved with Special Olympics for over 10 years. Bill and his basketball team competed at the 2018 Special Olympics USA Games.

William O'Brien IV- Athlete



Hometown: Shrewsbury, MA

Bio: Liam O'Brien of Shrewsbury, MA has participated in Special Olympics for 10 years, starting with basketball. He now competes in track and field, golf and soccer. He loves that Special Olympics has presented him with year-round athletic opportunities and the chance to make many friends. He is interested in golf, history, travel and video games. Liam got his driver's license in 2016 and has worked at a printing company for two years, where he works five days a week.

He was honored to play basketball in at the 2018 Special Olympics USA Games in Seattle and looks forward to competing at the Special Olympics World Games Abu Dhabi 2019 with his team.

Keith Peabody – Coach



Hometown: Worcester, MA

Bio: Keith Peabody of Worcester has been involved with Special Olympics for over 15 years. He has been a Special Olympics Unified Sports partner and coach in softball and basketball. In 2018, he coached the Massachusetts basketball team at Special Olympics USA Games in Seattle, Washington. Keith has coached basketball for 10 years.

Matthew Roy – Athlete



Hometown: Shrewsbury, MA

Bio: Matt Roy of Shrewsbury, Massachusetts is a longtime Special Olympics athlete. He began playing basketball on a Special Olympics Unified Sports team at the age eight. Since then, he has been an active participant in additional sports including track and field, softball and soccer. He was the manager of his high school baseball team and is currently employed in food service. He is also an active volunteer at his church and has traveled to South Africa, Romania, Poland and Puerto Rico on short mission trips. Through Special Olympics, Matt has learned teamwork and loves the community of athletes he gets to be a part of. He likes to keep up to date on all New England sports!

Marc Russell – Athlete

Hometown: Shrewsbury



Bio: Marc Andrew Russell was born September 12, 1980. One month later, his parents, who had yearned so long for a baby, were killed in a car accident, leaving Marc an orphan and ward of the state. Marc's maternal grandmother, Nancy, stepped in to raise and, in 1986, legally adopt him. Nancy was a persistent advocate, ensuring Marc received the best special education services available. She recognized early that Marc had inherited his father's athletic abilities and sought every opportunity for him to participate. Despite Marc's talent and outgoing attitude, he found it hard to fit in and make friends, something that often left him feeling depressed and withdrawn. At age 14, Marc moved in with his Aunt Ann, her husband Scott and their two young daughters in Shrewsbury, MA. The family introduced Marc to Special Olympics, where he quickly excelled in basketball, softball, volleyball, golf and bowling programs. These experiences transformed Marc's spirit, boosting his self-esteem and connecting him with a warm community of friends, coaches, fans and role models. Special Olympics truly changed Marc's life, instilling a deep personal confidence and love for helping others. Marc still resides in Shrewsbury, has his own apartment, and is a proud, 14-year Home Depot employee.

Josh Sargent – Athlete



Hometown: Shrewsbury, MA

Bio: Josh Sargent of Shrewsbury enjoys playing sports and hanging out with his dog, Lila. He is the middle child with two sisters and loves playing sports with his friends and meeting new people. Josh plays basketball, bocce and track and field. He has several gold medals from track and field events, and traveled to Seattle with his basketball team to compete in the 2018 Special Olympics USA Games. In his free time he likes watching the UFC, New England sports and loves dogs. Josh is working on getting his driver's license and is proud to have received his diploma and completed job training seminars and internships.

Triathlon

Pat Diskin – Coach

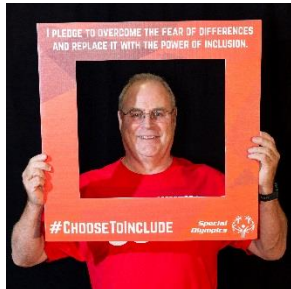


Hometown: Wrentham, MA

Bio: Pat Diskin first became involved with Special Olympics nearly 50 years ago as a graduate student at the University of Oregon when she did a practicum with Eugene Parks and Recreation where the culminating event was coaching at a Special Olympics track meet. Since then, she has volunteered with programs across the country and has attended numerous USA and World Games in various capacities including as a coach, official, support staff and part of the Youth Leadership Summit. She will be serving as head triathlon coach at Special Olympics World Games Abu Dhabi 2019. Currently a resident of Wrentham, Massachusetts, Pat coaches at the Wrentham Developmental Center and works with Special Olympics Massachusetts as a longtime volunteer. Pat loves to travel, be creative, bake and garden. She enjoys the build up to the games and looks forward to the arrival of the athletes. She said "Opening ceremonies is always a highlight because we have all gathered and are going to show the world once again what can happen when given a chance." She admires anyone who tries to make tomorrow better than today.

Golf

George Kent – Coach



Hometown: Hopkinton, MA

Bio: Coach Kent began working with Special Olympics Massachusetts in 1996 as Director of Sport Management and Training. In addition to his roles with Special Olympics, Mr. Kent has served on the Special Olympics United States Leadership Council Sports Committee, the Special Olympics North America "Coach Resource Development" and "Unified Sports" committees. Mr. Kent developed and implemented a comprehensive training and certification program for Special Olympics volunteer coaches. In 1999 he was the Head Coach for Massachusetts in the Special Olympics World Games in North Carolina. He participated in golf as a Unified partner with Jeffrey Bramley at the 2010 Special Olympics USA Games in Nebraska, as a golf caddie for Massachusetts athlete, Tyler Lagasse at the 2014 & 2018 Special Olympics USA Games, and served as a golf coach for Special Olympics USA at the 2015 Special Olympics World Games in Los Angeles.