Special Olympics
Arkansas

2020 Annual Report
Dear Friends and Stakeholders,

I think it is safe to say our 50th year was not quite what we expected! However, we held on tight to our core values and overcame the tough obstacles that 2020 threw at us. Special Olympics Arkansas (SOAR) athletes remain at the forefront of our decision. As you flip through our 2020 Annual Report you will see a completely different report than previous years. We held less than 10 competitions before March 2020. We were virtual only until November when we opened training for athletes. As you browse this report you will see how well the SOAR family rose to the challenge by creating unique opportunities and events. A few of my favorite highlights are below:

Our team launched and enhanced the Coach Education program. This is a three tiered coach progression plan to improve quality coaching across the state. Taking advantage of the down time we created virtual education opportunities for coaches and athletes. More than 1040 coaches attended our online trainings. The topics covered, general coaching, sport specific, and health and wellness. Athletes participated in leadership trainings, dances, and virtual healthy athletes events. We expanded our capacity for health and wellness programming by adding a new member to our team. Jennifer Stane came on board May 15th as the Coordinator of Wellness and Coach Advancement.

In the early months of the pandemic we spent countless hours creating a plan to return to activities. We successfully launched our SO Ready plan with a program wide virtual conference in July 2020. The detailed an expansive safety plan continues to serve our athletes, volunteers and other stakeholders as we keep safety as the highest priority.

We re-imagined our fundraising events to ensure we met all safety recommendations while still engaging our community partners. Our Law Enforcement Torch Run still raised nearly $400,000. They also created a tremendous amount of awareness with their Cruisers Carry the Flame in May 2020. In July of 2020 we launched the first SOAR apparel store online, hitting nearly $5000 in sales within the first twelve months.

I saved the best for last; we celebrated our 50th anniversary with a virtual birthday party. We published a birthday party toolkit and on September 16th the entire Special Olympics Arkansas family celebrated separately, yet together! It was energizing to see all of the different ways our teams, volunteers, and partners celebrated. They went all out with balloons, cakes, fitness workouts, and Special Olympics trivia games!

2020 definitely tested our endurance. I am grateful for our SOAR family and the tenacity everyone displayed through such an unprecedented time.

Sincerely,

Terri Weir,
Special Olympics Arkansas, CEO
#10

5 Arkansas Schools earn Unified Champion Schools National Banner Recognition. Receiving this honor as a result of meeting national standards of excellence in the areas of inclusion, advocacy and respect. Greenbrier’s Wooster Elementary, Huntsville High School, Vilonia’s Frank Mitchell Freshman Academy, and High School were among a select number of schools to receive this distinction this year across the nation.

#9

Special Olympics Arkansas Adds Coordinator of Health and Wellness and Coach Advancement position to progress the already booming programs! The Coordinator of Wellness and Coach Advancement has allowed SOAR to further focus on integrating health initiatives into sports programming and coaches education, planning and executing various health screenings and collaborating with health partners and healthcare providers.

#8

11 Universities and Colleges increase their engagement with SOAR. Creating more opportunities for inclusion, awareness, leadership, and sports! Engagement ranged from inclusive health, Unified Intramurals, internship opportunity, fitness program development, and so much more!

#7

Partners Show up Big for Special Olympics Arkansas athletes. Despite the challenging year SOAR’s Champion partners show up in a big way. Arkansas Realtors Association, made up of Realtors across the entire state raise over $160,000. Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics Arkansas partner, Centennial Bank refused to accept pandemic for an answer as well and forged ahead with their Flame of Hope Icon campaign, raising over $20,000!

#6

Re-imagined fundraisers exceed 2020 expectations! The challenges of 2020 meant long time fundraisers like Truck Convoy and Charity Olive Hour needed to be re-imagined. Committee members and staff worked diligently to create a different opportunity that kept safety in mind. Truck Convoy took a road trip approach, challenging companies to carry the awareness for Special Olympics Arkansas to as many states as possible. The two week Convoy Challenge raised over $31,000 and reached more than 40 states. Some of the changes to Charity Olive Hour included live music and additional seating space. The events partners really stepped up. The event overall raised $49,000.
Most Impactful Moments of 2020 (continued)

#5
UCA earns Golisano Health award for their dedication to inclusive health. University of Central Arkansas earns The Golisano Health Leadership Award for our Inclusive Health partnership. This award is the highest honor from Special Olympics and was created to recognize local health champions and their extraordinary efforts toward fulfilling the goals, values, and mission of Special Olympics' global health program, made possible by the Golisano Foundation.

#4
Launched Enhancements for Coach Education. Enhanced Coaches Education through virtual education and launched a Coaches recognition program! To date 1029 people attended the 2020 virtual trainings!

#3
Special Olympics Arkansas Health Messenger and Athlete leader, Stephanie Price, explodes on a national stage inspiring athletes and partners from all over North America to focus on fitness. Stephanie stepped up during the pandemic rocking virtual fitness boot camps, hosting Facebook live fitness events, and being selected for the Pandora Champion playlist. Stephanie was also selected to represent Arkansas Athletes on the Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics Arkansas Executive Council.

#2
Law Enforcement Officers create Cruiser Convoy to ensure Flame of Hope continues to burn for inclusion! Over 75 Police and fire Vehicles from all over Arkansas gathered to show their support for Special Olympics Arkansas athletes. The entire state engaged in the SOAR support day by wearing the Athlete designed, 2020 Law Enforcement Torch Run t-shirt. This campaign raised $26,000. “Special Olympics Athletes and their families count on the Flame of Hope to remind everyone of the importance for acceptance and inclusion. We were not going to let them down this year,” Eli Keller, Director Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics Arkansas and Sgt. Maumelle Police Department.

#1
Special Olympics Arkansas Celebrated 50 years with statewide Birthday Party! Statewide athletes, community partners, and key SOAR stakeholders celebrated 50 years of Special Olympics Arkansas in a one day celebration on September 16th. Everyone celebrated inclusion, the joy of sports, and history together even though we were apart!
**Mission:**

The mission of Special Olympics Arkansas is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic type sports for all 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.

**Purpose:**

Special Olympics Arkansas is an organization that unleashes the human spirit through the transformative power and joy of sport, everyday around the state. Through programming in sports, health, education and community building, Special Olympics Arkansas is changing the lives of people with intellectual disabilities, solving the global injustice, isolation, intolerance and inactivity they face. Special Olympics Arkansas is providing opportunities for more than 19,500 athletes and 16,000 volunteers in all counties across the State of Arkansas.
Competition

Special Olympics Arkansas currently runs 245 competitions statewide for over 19,500 Athletes. Sports competitions across the state are broken into 17 geographical areas. Athletes then have the opportunity to compete in 6 different statewide competitions throughout the year. The events consist of 15 different types of sports; Athletics (Track and Field), Basketball, Bocce, Bowling, Cycling, Flag Football, Floor Hockey, Soccer, Swimming, Powerlifting, Softball, and Cheerleading. Special Olympics Arkansas also offers 8 Unified sports to promote social inclusion.

2020 Statistics:

- Hosted 10 competitions statewide prior to March 2020 (Pandemic shut down)
- Developed Unified Fitness, Young Athletes, and other Fitness programming to send to parents, schools, and community partners to use for virtual events
- Created outline ready for implementation for a Fitness Invitational competition
- Updated program wide sports materials (taking advantage of unprecedented down time)
- Added Tennis as a sport using virtual guidance and training
Training

Special Olympics Arkansas is a pure sport organization focused on truly bringing each athlete to their personal best. Training is a key factor in meeting this part of our mission. Training refers to both coaches education and athlete sport focused training. Quality competitions are achieved through determined training.

2020 Statistics:

- Created extensive virtual coaches training menu
- 1035 coaches attended the virtual trainings offered throughout the year
- Added Tennis to coaches trainings with the help of Arkansas Cup and Arkansas USTA
- Offered virtual fitness training to athletes
- Implemented new tiered coaches progression training program
Unified Champion Schools

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools promotes communities where all young people are agents of change, fostering acceptance, respect, dignity, and advocacy for people with intellectual disabilities and thereby anyone who is perceived as different. Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools integrates Special Olympics programs with ongoing youth activities and focuses on creating and sustaining education systems, classroom practices, school climate and community engagement to ensure all students develop intellectual, physical, civic, and emotional competencies.

2020 Statistics:

- Held one on one meetings with UCS schools to understand how we could provide the best resources and programs for their virtual needs
- 143,499 students impacted by Unified Champion Schools
- 200 Unified Champion Schools in the state
- 20 Special Olympics College Clubs
- Held Unified PE virtual training for University of Arkansas Students
- 5 Unified Champion School Districts
- 7 total schools nationally recognized through UCS National Banner Program
- 27 Youth Activation Committee members
- Youth activation committee hosted Zoom Athlete hangout
Young Athletes

Young Athletes is a unique sport and play program for children with intellectual disabilities. The focus is on fun activities that are important to mental and physical growth. Children ages 2 to 7 enjoy games and activities that develop motor skills and hand-eye coordination. Young Athletes is an early introduction to sports and to the world of Special Olympics Arkansas. The children learn new things, play and have lots of fun. These building blocks result in notable improvements in a child’s motor skills, cognitive development, social skills, emotional development and communication skills.

2020 Statistics:

- 131 locations offering Young Athletes programing
- 25,000 Young Athletes participating statewide
- Began a partnership with Library systems to offer Young Athletes materials to parents, schools, and communities
- Increased the use of Young Athletes resources among partners within health care, education, and government
Special Olympics' vision of its health program, made possible by the Golisano Foundation, is to create a world where people with intellectual disabilities have the same opportunities and access to health care as people without intellectual disabilities. Special Olympics' 19 years of experience identifying and addressing the unmet health needs of people with intellectual disabilities has revealed the myriad of complex barriers to health faced by this population. Barriers to this vision include lack of access to quality health care, education, and resources. Through this multi-layered effort, Special Olympics is working to create a tipping point where health becomes inclusive for people with intellectual disabilities globally by changing curriculum, training health care professionals and policymakers, influencing policy, advocating for inclusive health programming, building partnerships for follow up care and harnessing the power of the Special Olympics Movement to build awareness.

2020 Statistics:

- 175 partners working together to improve health care quality and access for people with ID in Arkansas
- 3300 athletes and families educated at competitions in health topics through Live Healthy
- 6000 Young Athletes impacted by on-site Live Healthy Education events
- Added new staff Coordinator of Wellness and Coach Advancement
- 615 coaches received training on increasing health and wellness into practices
- 4 Wellness Integration internships
- 11 universities adopting Inclusive Health, 15 universities with some element of Inclusive Health on campus
- 200 Unified Champion Schools focused on whole school approach to wellness
- 525 healthcare professionals trained on Inclusive Health
- Hosted 3 Virtual Healthy Athletes programs with 150 athletes in attendance
- Completed virtual fitness challenge with 175 athletes and coaches participating
- 100% of athletes screened have a place for follow up care
- Offered virtual inclusive health trainings for professionals
Athlete Leadership

Through sports training and competitions, Special Olympics Arkansas helps people with intellectual disabilities achieve joy, acceptance and success. They gain the confidence that comes with achievement. They feel empowered. Our Athlete Leadership Programs can take athletes even farther -- as leaders and spokespeople respected in their communities.

Special Olympics Arkansas Athlete Leadership Program allows athletes to explore opportunities for greater participation in our movement beyond sports training and competition: as coaches, officials, team captains, spokespeople and board and committee members. These roles give athletes a voice in shaping the Special Olympics movement, and a chance to spread the word about the transformations Special Olympics can bring to individuals and families. The Athlete Leadership Programs also provides a way for athletes to showcase talents and interests that may have gone unnoticed.

2020 Statistics:

- Created virtual Athlete leadership/Health messenger trainings through zoom
- Increased number of Athletes engaging in partnership meetings and presentations
- Athlete leaders Stephanie Price led 50 exercises for 50 years campaign to kick of 50th anniversary in Q1
- Added Athlete Leadership workbook to track journey
- Executed successful virtual Hill Day with three Athlete Leaders
Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics Arkansas

WHO WE ARE: The Law Enforcement Torch Run® for Special Olympics is the largest public awareness vehicle and grass-roots fundraiser for Special Olympics. Known as Guardians of the Flame, law enforcement members and Special Olympics athletes carry the Flame of Hope into the Opening Ceremony of local competitions, and into Special Olympics State, Provincial, National, Regional and World Games. Annually, more than 1600 dedicated and compassionate law enforcement members from all over the state carry the “Flame of Hope,” symbolizing courage and celebration of diversity uniting communities around the state. Arkansas is a part of a global movement that involves more than 110,000 members year-round.

WHAT WE DO: The LETR for Special Olympics Arkansas engages law enforcement statewide championing acceptance and inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities, starting first with their own communities. Over the years the Torch Run has evolved and now encompasses a variety of innovative fundraising platforms to include Plane Pull®, Polar Plunge®, Tip-A-Cop®, and more. Arkansas members host over 100 fundraising events year-round and consistently ranks in the emerald level of excellence raising over $500,000 each year since 2010 for Special Olympics Arkansas athletes.

2020 Statistics:

- Despite the challenges of 2020 with the pandemic LETR raised $385,406.81
- Re-imagined Truck Convoy to a Convoy Virtual Challenge engaging 6 companies more than 75 drivers raising $35,000. Successfully reaching 46 states with awareness
- Re-imagined Charity Olive Hour allowing us to maintain fundraising at $55,000
- Held Cruisers Carry the Flame event to create awareness despite 2020 Torch Run cancellation. 75 different agencies joined together to create the convoy
- Created sub-committees below Executive council to create better communication channels
COVID-19 Response

Just as the rest of the world the pandemic created unique obstacles and necessary action steps. Creating a response to the pandemic was extremely important for Special Olympics Arkansas. Below are the action steps taken to ensure a focus on safety:

- Cancellation of all in person events
- Creation of safety protocols plan
- Launch of SO Ready Safety protocols and procedures
- Created website for SO Ready program complete with an abundance of resources
- Hosted statewide stakeholders virtual conference to roll out SO Ready program plan - July
- Re-issued training on Phase back approach in December
- Provided more virtual opportunities in Sports, health, athlete leadership, and coaching
- Continued to work in conjunction with partners to keep up with the latest developments and plans on a state level
- Participated in monthly global calls with Special Olympics International to be sure we were considering all components needed for a successful approach to the pandemic
On average 75% of every dollar spent goes to support and grow our program.
Figures are taken from our 2020 Form 990.
Special Olympics Arkansas 2020 Board of Directors and Staff

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(Cash and/or in-kind)

Mission Champion Partner

Premier Partners

Platinum Partners

Gold Partners

Silver Partners

Bronze Partners

Blue Ribbon Partners

ANO
Diversity and Inclusion
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion are at the heart of all that we do at Special Olympics Arkansas. We strive to promote unity and create a world where everyone belongs.

We value, celebrate and respect all differences, backgrounds and perspectives and understand that greater diversity and inclusion creates a stronger and more innovative organization that delivers better results as we work with the athletes in all communities.