



Special Olympics BC Vancouver

Volunteer Information



WHAT'S MY ROLE?

Special Olympic volunteers work at every level of the organization. They are the heart and soul of British Columbia Special Olympics: they organize, train, fundraise, supervise and make all the decisions that keep Special Olympics growing. Volunteer positions may be tailored to fit individual talents, areas of interest and availability.

Benefits of volunteering for Special Olympics BC:

- specialized training and leadership skills
- make new friends
- support your community
- feel good about helping people
- volunteer recognition

Special Olympics has not only a place, but a need for your talents, energy and abilities. The opportunities we offer will be rewarding, real and very important to the athletes, the organization, and you. Without your help, our athletes may never have an opportunity to get into the game. For more information, please feel free to contact volunteers@sobcvancouver.org.

HISTORY

In the early 60's, Dr. Frank Hayden, a Toronto researcher, provided that given the opportunity, individuals with an intellectual disability could become physically fit and acquire the physical skills necessary to participate in sport. His research showed that involvement in sport not only improved physical fitness but also improved the intellectual ability of these individuals. Dr. Hayden's work came to the attention of the Kennedy Foundation in Washington, DC, and led to the creation of Special Olympics, a worldwide program providing sports training and competition for people with an intellectual disability.

In 1968, the first sports competition was held under the Special Olympics' banner at Soldier's Field in Chicago. To ensure Canada's representation at the competition, Dr. Hayden called upon friend, broadcaster, and humanitarian Harry "Red" Foster, to accompany a team to Chicago. Foster recognized the opportunity to enhance the lives of Canadians with an intellectual disability and, upon returning to Canada, began laying the foundation for the Special Olympics movement. In 1969, the first Canadian Special Olympics event was held in Toronto. From these modest beginnings the Special Olympics movement has spread across the country. Special Olympics Canada is recognized by Sport Canada as the main provider of sport services to people who have an intellectual disability.

ABOUT

Special Olympics BC is a registered charitable organization, incorporated in 1980. Governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, Special Olympics BC employs ten full-time staff to administer and coordinate the activities of over 3,000 athletes and 2,100 volunteers. Special Olympics is not just an event that happens every four years, throughout the province there are opportunities for athletes to train and compete 12 months of the year.



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AIM

SOBC aims to provide individuals with an intellectual disability the opportunity to enhance their life and celebrate personal achievement through positive sport experiences. We do more than just provide an opportunity to develop fitness, sport and motor skills. We provide a venue where athletes may compete against their personal best, and that of others, while facilitating an environment where every participant may gain self-confidence that will carry into their daily lives.

To provide sporting opportunities for as many individuals as possible, SOBC has developed programs in 47 different communities throughout the province. Each "Local" is required to provide monthly financial statements and Executive meeting minutes so that the provincial Office may ensure that athletes and volunteers are involved in the highest caliber of programs available. The ten staff members of the Provincial Office are responsible for providing necessary support to the 47 Locals so that each community may operate to the best of their ability. This involves support in Games planning, program development, legal issues, financial management, sponsorship, strategic planning, discipline, etc. Provincial Programming Conferences are held bi-annually so that Local Executives may set policies and procedures that are uniform throughout the province.

INFORMATION

As a Local of SOBC, each program must provide a list of active athletes and volunteers in that community and receive a registration grant from the Provincial Office based upon this figure. These funds, and those raised through Local initiatives, are used to operate sport programs within the community. To date, there are 21 programs that are sanctioned by SOBC. Dependent on the facilities and qualified volunteers in the community, a Local may operate any one of these programs:

- 5 & 10 Pin Bowling
- Athletics
- Bocce
- Cross Country Skiing
- Curling
- Downhill Skiing
- Figure Skating
- Fitness
- Floor Hockey
- Learn to Skate
- Power Lifting
- Rhythmic Gymnastics
- Running Club
- Snowshoeing
- Soccer
- Softball
- Speed Skating
- Swimming
- T-Ball
- Walking Club
- Weight Training

Operating 365 days a year, athletes and volunteers train very hard to achieve the goals that they set for themselves. Policy of SOBC states that all coaching volunteers must receive National Coaching Certification within their first year in order to operate a Special Olympics program. Similar to the generic sports calendar, athletes at SOBC may compete at Regional, Provincial, national, and International Games. Based on this 4-year cycle, any athlete, at any developmental level, is given the opportunity to travel throughout the world based upon their performance at Games' competitions. In February 2004, approximately 95 athletes traveled to Charlottetown for the Special Olympics Canada Winter Games and in February 2005, qualified members of Team BC traveled to Nagano, Japan for World Winter Games. The World Summer Olympics were held in Dublin, Ireland in July 2003 and in July 2007 the World Summer Games will be held in China.

Although SOBC is a sporting organization, there are other initiatives that have evolved out of our sport programs. These programs facilitate the growth and development of our athletes while promoting social interaction and public integration. One of the most successful is the Athlete speakers Bureau. This course trains athletes to give speeches within their community. A volunteer speech coach is also trained to assist in the development of the speech. To date, athletes have used these to recruit volunteers, thank sponsors and educate the public.



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INFORMATION

Special Olympics is the only organization of its kind throughout the world. In 160 countries worldwide, over 2 million individuals are building their self-confidence through the acquisition of various sports skills. SOBC is a successful part of this movement facilitating Canadians with an intellectual disability and providing a venue to display their gifts to the world.

SOBC is the only society in BC that solely provides sports programs for individuals with an intellectual disability. Everyone is inspired as athletes strive to do their best under the athlete's oath: "let me win; but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt."

Many people mistakenly believe that Special Olympics is only for youth with an intellectual disability. Conversely, approximately 75% of the 3,000 athletes are adults. SOBC involves individuals of all ages and ability levels. We offer developmental programs for those with low motor skills as well as programs for those athletes who are able to compete at a higher skill level. No matter the motor skill ability, athletes have an opportunity to compete at Provincial, National, and International Games. There are equal opportunities for everyone!

It is not only the athletes who benefit from SOBC programs. Family, friends, supporters and volunteers gain satisfaction from the achievements of these athletes that is not easily found in today's culture. Community involvement, watching a loved one succeed both in sport and in life, as well as skills learned through the many facets of volunteering, are available to anyone who wants to become involved. Our province wide programs have a huge and positive effect on every aspect of an athlete's life. As they develop their fitness, sport and motor skills, we see an exponential growth in their self-confidence and pride. Through year-round training and Provincial, National, and International competitions, every participant is rewarded with new friendships, travel, freedom, an enhanced level of fitness and an improved self-regard.