

Special Olympics New Mexico

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SPECIAL OLYMPICS TO UNITE THE USA IN THE FIRST-EVER UNIFIED RELAY ACROSS AMERICA PRESENTED BY BANK OF AMERICA

**Hitting Every State Over 46 days, Thousands Will Carry the Flame of Hope Lighting the Way to a
Future of Inclusion and Respect for People with Intellectual Disabilities**

Unified Relay Across America coming to New Mexico from June 30 – July 3

[Albuquerque, NM], April 21, 2014 – Registration is open for the first-ever [Special Olympics Unified Relay Across America](#) presented by Bank of America. The Unified Relay will give anyone in the country a chance to carry the Flame of Hope that will be lit in Athens, Greece and help deliver it to Los Angeles for the [Special Olympics World Summer Games](#). Over the course of 46 days, in a hand-to-hand exchange, thousands of participants will run, walk or bike a segment of the relay in this team and individual fundraising event as it passes through all 50 states.

The relay will culminate at the Opening Ceremony of the 2015 Special Olympics World Games in Los Angeles on July 25, 2015. ESPN, the official broadcaster of the World Games, will produce the Opening Ceremony live as well as a nightly highlights program throughout the nine-day event.

“In a time when there is so much dividing people, our World Games offer an opportunity for our nation to come together to celebrate differences and unify in the spirit of respect and inclusion,” said Special Olympics CEO Janet Froetscher. “With so many people coming to the U.S. for the World Games, this is a once in a lifetime opportunity for every citizen to carry the Flame of Hope through their communities where it will light the caldron that burns during the Games. As the torch makes its way across our country it will bring us together in a unique way that will open hearts and minds.”

The U.S. portion of the Unified Relay will begin on 26 May, where it will be split into three simultaneous routes starting in Augusta, Maine; Miami, Florida; and Washington, D.C. Traveling west, all three routes will become unified in Los Angeles on 10 July. Along each route, welcoming ceremonies and community celebrations will take place nightly with musical performances, celebrity guests and Unified Sports Experiences.

The Unified Relay will enter the state of New Mexico from June 30 – July 3, traveling across the state and holding community celebrations in Santa Fe, NM.

In its role as presenting sponsor, Bank of America will provide significant financial and volunteer support to the Unified Relay. In addition, the company will use its deep connections in local communities to encourage participation among individuals, families and businesses.

“By putting our scale and resources behind the Unified Relay, we’ll help bring a message of unity and inclusion to an incredibly large audience, and hopefully break some fundraising records along the way,”

**Unquestionable Integrity. Unwavering Excellence. Unbelievable Fun. Undeniable
Respect. Unlimited Family.**



said Anne Finucane, Bank of America global chief strategy and marketing officer and a member of the Special Olympics Board of Directors.

When the three relays arrive in Los Angeles, the [Law Enforcement Torch Run](#) Final Leg Team, comprised of law enforcement officers representing 36 countries, along with 10 Special Olympics athletes, will accept the torches and continue the Flame of Hope's journey to communities throughout California, including Host Towns where Special Olympics World Games delegations from more than 170 countries will participate in pre-Games cultural exchanges.

Each Unified Relay route will be led by a group of co-captains, including media personalities, actors, musicians, athletes and Special Olympics athletes. Co-captains will serve as spokespeople for the Special Olympics movement and the Unified Relay, encouraging participation through registration, fundraising and spectatorship. Co-Captains include Damian Lillard, Special Olympics Global Ambassador and American professional basketball star, Elena Delle Donne, Special Olympics Global Ambassador and American professional basketball star, Joe Haden, Special Olympics Global Ambassador and American professional football star, Maria Menounos, Special Olympics Global Ambassador and journalist, Aloe Blacc, American singer and songwriter, Josh Turner, American singer and actor, Special Olympics North Carolina athlete Zach Commander, Special Olympics Pennsylvania athlete Johanna Schoeneck and Special Olympics Iowa athlete Corey Leonhard.

Supporters will have the opportunity to run with the Flame of Hope by signing up as an individual torchbearer or as a team of torchbearers for a half-mile walk or run segment or a five-mile bike segment in an area of interest across the United States. Torchbearers will also have the opportunity to keep the torch they ran with by meeting certain fundraising goals. Funds raised from the Unified Relay will go to Special Olympics to provide sports training, competition opportunities and additional programming that empowers people with intellectual disabilities to become accepted and valued members of their communities, which leads to a more respectful and inclusive society for all. Participants can find out more information and sign up for the Unified Relay Across America presented by Bank of America at www.unifiedrelay.org.

About Special Olympics

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 4.4 million athletes in 170 countries. With the support of more than 1.3 million coaches and volunteers, Special Olympics delivers 32 Olympic-type sports and more than 81,000 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, Lions Clubs International, Mattel, Microsoft, P&G, Bank of America, Essilor Vision Foundation, the B. Thomas Golisano Foundation, Finish Line, The Safeway Foundation, and Safilo Group. Visit Special Olympics at www.specialolympics.org. Engage with us on: Twitter [@specialolympics](https://twitter.com/specialolympics); fb.com/specialolympics; youtube.com/specialolympicshq, instagram.com/specialolympics and specialolympicsblog.wordpress.com.



About the 2015 Special Olympics World Summer Games

With 7,000 athletes and 3,000 coaches representing 177 countries, along with 30,000 volunteers and an anticipated 500,000 spectators, the 2015 Special Olympics World Games - being staged in Los Angeles July 25 - August 2, 2015 - will be the largest sports and humanitarian event anywhere in the world in 2015, and the single biggest event in Los Angeles since the 1984 Olympic Games. The 2015 Special Olympics World Games, with the unparalleled spirit, enthusiasm, teamwork, joy and displays of courage and skill that are hallmarks of all Special Olympics events, will feature 25 Olympic-style sports in venues throughout the Los Angeles region. The Opening Ceremony, to be held July 25, 2015 in the historic Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, site of the 1932 and 1984 Olympic Games, is expected to attract 80,000 spectators. For more information on the 2015 Special Olympics World Games, including volunteer and sponsorship opportunities, visit www.LA2015.org and on social with #ReachUpLA on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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