MISSION

Special Olympics New Mexico provides year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for 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.
Message from our Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Not often do we call on sport to lead social change, but it is in our state, and it is happening under the banner of Special Olympics New Mexico (SONM). If our work in 2013 had a theme, it would have been PLAY UNIFIED TO LIVE UNIFIED. By creating more opportunities for children and adults with intellectual disabilities and those without disabilities to train, play, and compete together as teammates – New Mexicans from three years old to seventy-three years old experienced unity and friendship through our Unified Sports programs.

From a leadership perspective, we celebrated SONM’s Board of Directors whose work throughout the year revealed passion for the mission, strategic decision making, and increased community connection. Developing Board policies as an ethical guide for later action, as well as making deeper investments in our organization’s financial sustainability, Board members stayed focused, challenged, and engaged.

If we were to articulate a “favorite memory” of 2013, it had to have been SONM’s first Unified Flag Football Competition. From the time they walked onto the field, we witnessed Special Olympics athletes, who for their entire lives have only had opportunities to watch this game, approach each down with great concentration followed by entertaining dances in the end zone! Adding flag football was just one more reminder that more than anything, people with intellectual disabilities simply want to belong to the same things we all belong to. “Hike” never sounded so good to all of us.

We end 2013 with a depth of gratitude to those who have made our work possible and the athletes who have made our lives more meaningful. The realization that we are serving only 2% of New Mexicans with intellectual disabilities makes the Special Olympics Movement one of need - and for those athletes and families still waiting – one of hope.
About Special Olympics New Mexico

Our History

Special Olympics New Mexico (SONM) was incorporated in 1977 and is authorized and accredited by Special Olympics Incorporated, head-quartered in Washington, D.C. Special Olympics was created by the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation and is authorized by the International Olympic Committee to use the word “Olympics.” Mrs. Eunice Kennedy Shriver was the founder of Special Olympics Inc.

Our Future

Special Olympics New Mexico looks to the future as a time for change and growth. SONM’s organizational strategic plan for 2012-2015 outlines key priorities to serve more athletes with quality opportunities. In 2013 we touched on the following pillars of the strategic plan:

- Advance Quality Sports and Competition
- Build Inclusive Communities
- Connect Fans and Funds
- Improve Athlete Quality of Life

By developing and fulfilling these priorities, we hope to expand the capacity of our organization and bring more people to our playing fields.

Core Values

Special Olympics New Mexico prides itself on five Core Values—Unquestionable Integrity, Unwavering Excellence, Unbelievable Fun, Undeniable Respect, and Unlimited Family.

In 2011, in partnership with the New Mexico Ethics Alliance, Special Olympics New Mexico designated these five core values as a set of ideals and actions that Special Olympics New Mexico athletes, families, community and corporate partners, donors, volunteers, and staff should uphold with pride and dignity in order to stay true to the Special Olympics Movement.
Sports

Special Olympics New Mexico’s program focuses on providing a year-round, statewide, quality sports experience for our athletes. In 2013, we provided training and competition in Aquatics, Athletics (Track & Field), Basketball, Bocce, Bowling, Equestrian, Golf, Gymnastics, Poly Hockey, Soccer, Unified Softball, Unified Flag Football, Unified Bowling, Unified Golf, and Unified Volleyball. These sports are played throughout the year at one of each of our six State Competitions.

Before our athletes compete in a State Competition, they go through eight weeks of extensive training and compete in a prequalifying Area competition. By completing this training program, our athletes develop fitness and improve their sports skills, both of which ensure a competition that maintains the integrity of the sport.

Coach’s Education

This year, Coach’s Education converted its largely in-person hands-on training program to an online certification system.

- All Background Checks can now be completed using an online volunteer portal through the SONM website
- General Orientation and Protective Behavior Quizzes can now be completed online through SONM website
- Coaches can now obtain their sport re-certification through the SONM website in 10 of our sports
- New coaches are sport certified through a mentorship program with their own team

As a result of these changes, we have 333 more certified coaches in 2013 than in 2012.
Sports

State Competitions

Mayor’s Invitational Indoor Track Meet, Albuquerque
State Poly Hockey Championships, Farmington
State Summer Games, Albuquerque
Four Corners Invitational, Farmington
State Equestrian, Clovis
Holiday Classic, Las Cruces

By the Numbers

3,200 SONM Athletes
102 Young Athletes and Partners
1,603 Coaches
6,132 Volunteers
61 Family Members in Leadership Roles
13 Sports Offered
62 Competition Opportunities
35 Coaches Trainings
156 Communities Served
74 Registered Local Programs
Healthy Athletes

The health of Special Olympics athletes is directly related to their quality of life and ability to train and compete. Special Olympics New Mexico addresses these health concerns through the Healthy Athletes® Initiative, which provides health screenings to Special Olympics athletes in the following areas: Opening Eyes (vision), Special Smiles (dentistry), Fit Feet (podiatry), and FUNfitness (physical therapy).

In 2013, Special Olympics New Mexico offered Healthy Athletes screenings at two State Competitions. A total of 841 Healthy Athletes® screenings were conducted by 329 healthcare professionals and volunteers. Through a partnership with the Lion’s Club, Delta Dental, and other healthcare organizations, our athletes received mouth guards, prescription eyewear and other health services free of charge.

In Opening Eyes, 260 athletes were screened. Of the athletes who were screened, 164 received prescription glasses or prescription sports goggles. In Special Smiles, 313 athletes were screened and of those screened, 307 received fabricated mouth guards. In FUNfitness, 120 athletes were screened and of those screened, 110 athletes received referrals for further treatment. In Fit Feet, 148 athletes were screened and evaluated for shoe fittings and ankle/foot pain, and 35 were referred for further treatment. By offering these screenings, we are able to connect our athletes with proper healthcare as well as connect health organizations in order to provide the best care possible for our athletes.

“FUNfitness has been one of the most rewarding and fulfilling endeavors that I have ever done in my life. The range of emotions that I experience every time that we do this is wide; laughing to crying and the love that I feel for our athletes is amazing. Since we started this screening I am struck by the huge lack of Skilled Physical Therapy services in which our athletes have access. Fully 90-95% of athletes screened by FUNfitness need PT and are not receiving therapy. This appears to be a combination of a lack of PT’s in the rural communities and a lack of state funding to cover these individuals state wide.”

-Randy Torbett, P.T., FUNFitness Clinical Director
Initiatives

Project Unify

Project UNIFY is an education-based initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Education that aims to incorporate Special Olympics Unified Sports programs into schools in order to create more inclusive school communities while empowering youth as agents of change. Special Olympics New Mexico has been working for the last five years implementing Project UNIFY in more New Mexico schools.

In 2013, nineteen schools in the Albuquerque Public Schools, Las Cruces Public Schools, Farmington, Bloomfield, and Rio Rancho School Districts participated in Project UNIFY—pairing disabled and non-disabled students who trained and competed in Special Olympics sports. In addition to the sports component, students also planned school-wide awareness campaigns, like the Spread the Word to End the Word Campaign, seeking to eliminate the derogatory use of the word “retard,” thus engaging and educating their peers.

Young Athletes

The Young Athletes Program (YAP) is a sports and play program for elementary-age students with intellectual disabilities. Children ages 2–7 with intellectual disabilities participate in this program alongside non-disabled students who act as coaches and partners, also called “buddies.” These sports play activities aid in developing motor skills and hand-eye coordination for the Young Athletes, but more importantly this program helps to develop social skills and acceptance for both them and their buddies.

By utilizing this program prior to Special Olympics eligibility age, children are given an early introduction to the world of Special Olympics. They have the opportunity to develop physical and social skills that they will be able to use when they are old enough to compete in Special Olympics.

In 2013, the Young Athletes Program was in five New Mexico schools and there were a total of 41 Young Athletes and 61 non-disabled buddies.
The Law Enforcement Torch Run® is a community-building organization that promotes and empowers New Mexico law enforcement agencies to raise awareness for Special Olympics New Mexico. Celebrating its 32nd Anniversary in 2013, the Law Enforcement Torch Run® is Special Olympics’ largest grass-roots fundraiser and public awareness vehicle resulting in over $46 million raised for Special Olympics Programs around the world in the 2012-2013 program year.

Guardians of the Flame: Our Program

At our frontline level, LETR is led by a State Director, Assistant State Director, Regional Coordinators, and Local Agency Coordinators. In 2012, LETR redefined its administrative infrastructure, strengthened its leadership, and increased its operational and promotional resources to offer LETR Agencies (i.e. law enforcement officers and their families) a more cohesive and sustainable culture. Today, our refocused program provides each participant a fun and rewarding experience by offering five available fundraising and non-fundraising activities year-round with and for local SONM athletes and their families. One highlight event is our annual Torch Run State Relay where hundreds of LETR officers carry the Flame of Hope torch nearly 1,600 miles across New Mexico’s main roads, highways, and back roads to the Opening Ceremonies of the Special Olympics State Summer Games in Albuquerque.

Fueling the Flame: LETR By The Numbers

11 - # of Agency Activities  
20 - # of LETR Communities  
24 - # of LETR Agencies  
425 - # of State Torch Run Relay Runners  
$44,250 - # of total Community Partner Funds Raised  
$204,404 - # of LETR Agency Funds Raised

Presenting Sponsor: Wells Fargo

“Wells Fargo is honored to partner with Special Olympics New Mexico and support their inspiring work of bringing families and communities together. For over 20 years, we’ve been investing in their mission of empowering children and adults with intellectual disabilities through the joy of sports. We believe in giving back and strengthening our communities, and we take pride in being the Presenting Sponsor of this year’s Law Enforcement Torch Run.”

- Jennifer Riordan, Vice President Community Relations, Wells Fargo
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PNM

“It has been another great year for Special Olympics New Mexico. Our sports competitions continue to grow in athlete participation. Watching the pride, joy and appreciation displayed by Special Olympic athletes is something that touches our hearts and makes all of us so proud that we can offer meaningful opportunities for athletes with intellectual disabilities. We could not continue to grow our programs without the generous financial support of so many individuals and corporate sponsors. Our thanks to all who have helped improve the lives of Special Olympics New Mexico athletes. Fortunately, we are also blessed to have a very passionate and dedicated Board of Directors that works tirelessly to help provide the resources needed by our staff and athletes to sustain our organization. We look forward to everyone’s continued support as we reach out to find more athletes who are so deserving of the life changing opportunities offered by Special Olympics New Mexico. “

-Jack Eichorn, Board Vice Chairman 2013
Although SONM remained stable in 2013, just like other businesses and nonprofit organizations, we felt the pinch. We have made aggressive adjustments in our programs and have worked hard at doing everything possible to minimize the impact on our athletes. We are investing in new fundraising strategies to secure our future, but this is a challenging time and we are in need. We remain proud that 79 cents of every dollar raised in 2013 was spent on program services.

-Steve Pino, Treasurer, 2013 Board of Directors