LETTER FROM CEO

Britt Oase

It may seem that 2020 has shown us how to be brave in the attempt, as virtually (excuse the pun) nothing has unfolded how we would have expected or hoped at the beginning of the year – a sentiment shared by most all businesses and nonprofits. Gold, silver, and bronze have long been the aspiration for Special Olympics athletes – honors that reward hard work and the joy of achieving a goal. While we have not been able to provide in-person competition and decorate our athletes with medals in 2020, we have undoubtedly been surrounded by winners in Oregon, making this one of our most exceptional chapters as an organization yet.

"Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt."
Special Olympics Athlete Oath

THE YEAR WE PLANNED

Our original game plan for 2020 was built upon the excitement and momentum that we had with a memorable and successful 2019 Fall season and 2019-2020 Winter season, which included:

- 23 regional tournament teams held 34 Unified soccer league matches
- Participation of 150 schools in our Unified Champion Schools program, which included 3,350 athletes and Unified partners – and 64,000 students benefited from the all-school assemblies
- 228 teachers were trained in Unified Champion School activities
- 271 athletes participated in the Unified soccer season and Unified soccer clinics with 211 Unified partners
- Nike Youth Games with 579 volunteers had 377 people participate
- Six youth summit events had 1,038 students and teachers from 43 schools in attendance
- 2,000 athletes and Unified partners trained and competed in aquatics, bowling, soccer, and volleyball (Fall Season)
- 2,000 athletes and Unified partners trained and registered to compete in powerlifting and basketball and trained in snow sports (Some competitions were canceled due to safety precautions)
HOW 2020 PUSHED US TO BE STRONGER

Our athletes thrive on being together – blocking shots on the basketball courts, racing against each other in swim lanes, dashing down tracks, and making passes on soccer fields. The camaraderie amongst teammates and the grace shown to competitors is just as powerful. Sport is our platform for health, fitness, and social engagement. When Covid hit, we were unwilling to put our athletes, many of whom have compromised immune systems, at risk. What does a sport organization do when sport as we know it is no longer possible?

We decided we needed to be bigger than sport – we are in the people business and our athletes depend on us for structure in their daily lives, maintaining their health, and being a part of an inclusive and joyful community. Quickly, our staff, board, and volunteers put on our hard hats, rolled up our sleeves, and started to build online programs that athletes could participate in at home.

"Thank you to the volunteers and coaches for putting the virtual sports together! So proud of my JJ!"
- Athlete Mom
2020 was not what we planned, but we will come out stronger for having been through it. The virtual programs we’ve invested in and the partnerships we’ve built will endure. When life returns to normal, our athletes will have at-home fitness programs at their fingertips that would have never been possible had we not been thrown the Covid-curveball. From dance lessons with the Blazer Dancers, engaging in social hours with University of Portland student-athletes, having Thursday night dance parties with a live DJ, and finding ways to calm restless or stressed minds with meditation and yoga – we’ve expanded what we thought was possible to provide to our athletes.
Seasonal sports
Special Olympics Oregon offers 14 Olympic-style sports to children and adults with intellectual disabilities across Oregon. Like all athletes, our participants love to train, compete and do their best, whether they win or lose. We support them with Local Program training, regional and state competitions, school-based resources and more.

SOOR Active
A wellness community to keep athletes active, healthy, and engaged during this time that we are unable to offer in-person sports training. SOOR Active is an athlete-driven at-home fitness community focused on health and wellness resources for members on the Facebook platform.

Unified Champion Schools (UCS)
UCS is a movement that aims to change school communities through the power of inclusion, acceptance, sport and Unified activities. The Special Olympics Oregon Unified Champion School program is aimed at promoting social inclusion through planned and implemented shared sports training and competition experiences.

Athlete Interns
SOOR staff sponsors athletes in a professional level internship to athletes gain work-place skills, confidence and career building experience.

Athlete Input Council (AIC)
The AIC is a made up of Special Olympics Oregon athlete leaders who are passionate, engaged and ready to make a change in the world.

Volunteer Engagement
From Board of Directors to our local program management teams to our coaches, Special Olympics is rooted in a volunteer model, with services and programs depending on 10,000+ volunteers annually.

Young Professionals Council (YPC)
The YPC is a body of passionate young individuals dedicated to support and advance the efforts of Special Olympics Oregon through community engagement opportunities, volunteering, and fundraising.