



## ESPN and Special Olympics Expand Relationship with Eight-year Broadcast Agreement and Extension as Global Presenting Sponsor of Special Olympics Unified Sports®

**ESPN to be Global Broadcast Partner for Special Olympics World Games, World Winter Games and USA Games through 2027**

**ESPN continues as Global Presenting Sponsor of Special Olympics Unified Sports®; Since collaboration began, participation up 172%, coaches certified up 464%**

**ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex at Walt Disney World will host 2022 Special Olympics USA Games**

ESPN and Special Olympics have extended and expanded their game-changing relationship, with an eight-year extension of global programming and ESPN's Global Presenting Sponsorship of Special Olympics Unified Sports®.

"The relationship between ESPN and Special Olympics spans nearly three and a half decades and has been built on a bedrock of shared belief in the power of sports to positively impact lives and make lasting change in the world" said **Jimmy Pitaro**, President of ESPN and co-Chair, Disney Media Networks. "In many ways, Special Olympics represents all that is great about sports."

"The longstanding partnership between Special Olympics and ESPN goes beyond just broadcasting," said **Mary Davis**, Chief Executive Officer of Special Olympics. "This relationship is a catalyst for inclusion. ESPN is telling the stories of Special Olympics athletes at World Games, USA Games, and at some of the over 100,000 Special Olympics events happening around the world every year. In the past year alone, ESPN presented 40 short films showcasing our athletes, coaches, parents, and other game changers. Through its storytelling, media platforms and grant-making, ESPN is building positive attitudes towards people with intellectual disabilities and showing the world that the revolution is inclusion."

Added **Russell Wolff**, Executive Vice President and General Manager, ESPN+, "Together, along with the support of The Walt Disney Company, ESPN and Special Olympics have made real progress in spotlighting these incredible athletes and their achievements, bringing inspiring stories to millions of fans and driving meaningful growth in support of the Special Olympics movement."

### **SHOWCASING SPECIAL OLYMPICS: EIGHT-YEAR GLOBAL PROGRAMMING AGREEMENT**

The new eight-year programming agreement will see ESPN continue as the Global Broadcast Partner of signature Special Olympics events through 2027, including the World Games, World Winter Games and USA Games. ESPN's support of Special Olympics began over 30 years ago, and groundbreaking multimedia coverage of Special Olympics events began in 2015. Since then, ESPN has added year-round news and feature coverage of Special Olympics, its athletes, community, and culture. This agreement includes global coverage and distribution of

- Special Olympics World Winter Games Sweden 2021,
- Special Olympics USA Games 2022 ([Walt Disney World, Orlando](#)),
- Special Olympics World Games Berlin 2023
- Special Olympics World Winter Games 2025 (host city TBD),
- Special Olympics USA Games 2026 (host city TBD)
- Special Olympics World Games (host city TBD)

Following ESPN's unprecedented coverage of Special Olympics World Games Los Angeles 2015, ESPN signed on as the movement's Global Broadcast Partner. Since then, ESPN and Special Olympics have continued to raise the bar for coverage signature events at Special Olympics World Winter Games Austria 2017, 2018 Special Olympics USA Games in Seattle, and Special Olympics World Games Abu Dhabi 2019.

ESPN's coverage of major Special Olympics events will continue to reach fans around the world via ESPN and Disney networks and media platforms in North, Central and South America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, Australia and New Zealand, Europe and the Middle East. In addition, Special Olympics and ESPN will work together, along with host-market broadcasters, to bring events to even more viewers through additional distribution.

## **SPECIAL OLYMPICS UNIFIED SPORTS® – DRIVING THE #INCLUSIONREVOLUTION THROUGH THE POWER OF SPORTS**

In addition to its programming agreement, ESPN will continue to be the Global Presenting Sponsor of Special Olympics Unified Sports®, extending a role it has held since 2013. Dedicated to promoting social inclusion through shared sports training and competition, Special Olympics Unified Sports brings people with and without intellectual disabilities together to play, train and compete. The initiative was inspired by a simple principle: training together and playing together is a quick path to friendship and understanding and is an example of the power of inclusion.

In 2013, Special Olympics and ESPN began collaborating to expand Unified Sports, driving growth in participation of athletes, teammates, coaches, Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools programming, and sponsorship support. With the help of other organizations, institutions and sponsors, ESPN's involvement has contributed to the following:

- Increased Unified Sports athlete and teammate participation by 172% since 2013, to nearly 1,815,000 as of 2019 (Adding nearly 1.15 million participants in 6 years);
- Increased the number of Unified Sports coaches by 464%, to nearly 119,000 coaches (adding nearly 98,000 in 6 years);
- Increased overall global sponsorship revenue associated with Unified Sports by 300% in 6 years.

In addition, since 2013, ESPN has provided more than \$7 million in grants to support Unified Sports programs in 12 U.S. markets and 18 international countries.\*

Under the new extension of its Global Presenting Sponsorship, ESPN and Special Olympics will:

- Continue to build Unified Sports capacity through grants in the U.S. and multiple countries around the world, as well as support for conducting inclusive Unified Sports within refugee camps;
- Focus on improving the quality and raising awareness of Unified Sports initiatives;
- Recruit and train Unified Sports leaders at all levels of the movement, providing them with tools and training to develop and sustain Unified Sports in their communities;
- Work together to engage sports leagues and organizations to support the expansion of Unified Sports;
- Support global marketing campaign plans and activations;
- Increase Disney & ESPN employee engagement with local Special Olympics programs in key markets.

ESPN and The Walt Disney Company are proud of their nearly 35-year relationship with Special Olympics, together helping to move towards an end to discrimination against people with intellectual disabilities. In recent years, Disney and ESPN have continued to deepen their relationship through donation, program sponsorship, programming and volunteerism, including:

- Support for the Special Olympics 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration and global inclusion campaign;
- ESPN's year-long ["Game Changers" short film initiative](#);
- Disney and ESPN's Presenting Sponsorship of the 2018 Special Olympics USA Games and the Games Volunteer Program; Disney VolunTEARS engagement at Special Olympics events;
- ESPN's Global Presenting Sponsorship of Special Olympics Unified Sports;
- ESPN's role as Global Broadcast Partner of signature Special Olympics events.

## **2022 SPECIAL OLYMPICS USA GAMES AT WALT DISNEY WORLD RESORT**

Walt Disney World Resort [will host the 2022 Special Olympics USA Games](#), offering its 220-acre ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex as the premier venue for the USA Games. The use of the sports complex is part of Disney's multi-faceted support of the Special Olympics movement, which also includes additional sponsorship and in-kind support for the USA Games, Presenting Partner for the Volunteer Program and ESPN's role as the Global Presenting Sponsor of Special Olympics Unified Sports.

Taking place June 5 – 11, the 2022 Special Olympics USA Games will feature more than 4,000 athletes, 10,000 volunteers, 1,500 coaches and 125,000 fans from all 50 states and the District of Columbia, all of whom will unite in the Orlando area and participate in one of the country's most cherished sporting events.

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*\* Special Olympics markets supported by ESPN grants since 2013: US = CT, NC, WA, So Cal, FL, No Cal, NY, Louisiana, Ohio, Illinois, TX, AZ (12); International Countries = China, India, Philippines, Indonesia, South Africa, Rwanda, Zambia, Uganda, Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, Chile, Australia, Canada, Tanzania, Swaziland, Great Britain, Belgium (19)*

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#### **About ESPN Corporate Citizenship**

*ESPN believes that, at its very best, sports uplifts the human spirit. Its corporate citizenship programs use the power of sport to positively address society's most pressing needs through strategic community investments, cause marketing programs, collaboration with sports organizations and employee volunteerism, while also utilizing its diverse media assets. For more information go to [www.espn.com/citizenship](http://www.espn.com/citizenship).*

#### **About Special Olympics**

*Special Olympics is a global inclusion movement using sport, health, education and leadership programs every day around the world to end discrimination against and empower people with intellectual disabilities. **Founded in 1968**, and celebrating its 50th Anniversary this year, the Special Olympics movement has grown to more than 6 million athletes and Unified Sports partners in over **190 countries**. With the support of more than 1 million coaches and volunteers, Special Olympics delivers **32 Olympic-type sports** and over **100,000 games and competitions** throughout the year. Special Olympics is supported by individuals, foundations and partners, including Bank of America, the Christmas Records Trust, The Coca-Cola Company, ESPN, Essilor Vision Foundation, the Golisano Foundation, IKEA Foundation, the Lane Family, the Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics, Lions Clubs International, Safilo Group, Stavros Niarchos Foundation, TOYOTA, United Airlines, and The Walt Disney Company. **Click here for a full list of partners**. Engage with us on: **Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram** and **our blog on Medium**. Learn more at [www.SpecialOlympics.org](http://www.SpecialOlympics.org).*