

Be a fan of taking one step at a time.

"It engages students at all ability levels in fun activities that are motivating and get kids active and interacting with each other. This is a fabulous program."

~Julie Burmesch
Principal

A.C. Kiefer Educational Center
Wausau, Wisconsin

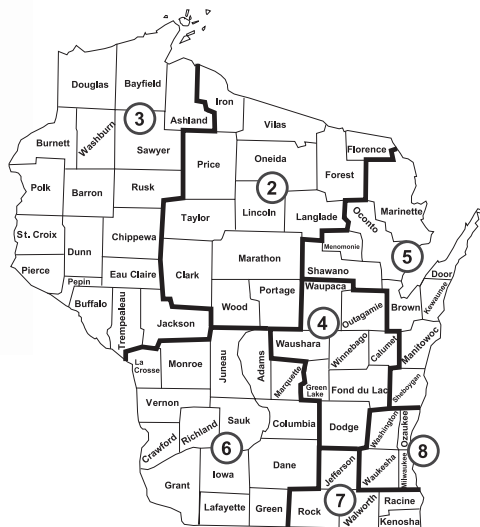
"Watching my four-year-old participate in these activities was phenomenal. It has helped him learn to kick and jump. It's been excellent for him. I had a really good time watching him play with other kids."

~Erin Radke
Parent and Volunteer
Wausau, Wisconsin

"My five-year-old, Noah, has Down Syndrome. This has helped him gain confidence and balance. It's a wonderful program for parents of children with special needs."

~Susan Waldkirch
Parent and Volunteer
Cedarburg, Wisconsin

Special Olympics Wisconsin consists of seven offices statewide, organizing and funding sports training and competitions for agencies in nearly 200 communities.



Special Olympics Wisconsin (SOWI) provides year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with cognitive disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in the sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.



Special Olympics
Wisconsin
Be a fan.

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Be a fan™



...of inclusion



Special Olympics
Wisconsin
youngathletes™

What is Young Athletes™?

Young Athletes™ is an innovative sports play program designed to introduce children with cognitive disabilities, ages 2-7, their peers, and families to the world of Special Olympics by pursuing the following goals:

- **Engage children** with cognitive disabilities through developmentally appropriate play activities designed to foster physical, intellectual, and social development.
- **Welcome family members** of children with cognitive disabilities to the Special Olympics network of support.
- **Raise awareness** about the abilities of children with disabilities through inclusive peer participation, demonstrations, and other events.

Through Young Athletes, children with and without disabilities interact together to build sports and social skills that they will use throughout their lives.

By providing a safe learning environment, Young Athletes gives children who have cognitive disabilities the tools they need to transition into Special Olympics when they turn eight years old.

The program also teaches children without disabilities the importance of inclusion, teamwork, and respect.

Young Athletes develops a child's basic skills. These building blocks lay the groundwork for the future success of the Special Olympics athlete or peer partner:

- Foundational Skills
- Walking & Running
- Balancing & Jumping
- Trapping & Catching
- Throwing
- Striking
- Kicking
- Advanced Skills



These skills advance the child's motor tracking, eye-hand coordination, and ability to relate these capabilities to sports.

How does it work?

Young Athletes is a versatile program that can work in various learning situations. The program is designed for families of young athletes to use at home in a fun atmosphere. It is also appropriate for kindergarten, schools, and play groups to use with small groups of young children with and without disabilities.

- Young Athletes sites are required to practice a minimum of eight sessions (consecutive weekly sessions are recommended).
- Youth practice a variety of individual skills to build upon their strengths and eventually play team sports.
- Young Athletes ends with a culminating event, much like a district or state tournament. Here, athletes demonstrate the skills they've learned and are acknowledged in an awards ceremony.

Be a fan of basics.

The Young Athletes program includes several resources to guide family members, educators, and other professionals as they conduct Young Athletes activities with their children, brothers, sisters, cousins, grandchildren, students, or patients.

Resources provided by Special Olympics Wisconsin include:

- Activity Guide-- descriptions of the official Young Athletes activities.
- Training DVD--instructional video of children performing the activities.
- Equipment Kit--balls, cones, hoops, poles, balance beams, rackets, scarves, and other fun items.

Whether used in the classroom or on the playground, the equipment will help teach your child to count, learn colors, understand new words, take turns, and develop social skills such as peer interaction between those with and without disabilities.

Introduce your youngster to a lifetime of sport skills, health, and fun through Special Olympics Wisconsin Young Athletes.

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

Special Olympics Athlete Oath

