



Special Olympics

Origin of Special Olympics logo

by Special Olympics athlete Nate Gerharz

In 2003, I (Nate Gerharz) was one of eight athletes from Wisconsin who attended an Athlete Leadership Programs training in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. At one workshop I learned what the Special Olympics logo means.

The logo has five people who each have six arms. The "down" position means "downtrodden," remembering a time when many people thought we were not able to make good decisions or try new things. This describes my life before I became involved in Special Olympics. I had few friends and spent most of my time alone.

The straight arms mean "equal"; we are the same in many ways. When I joined the Special Olympics swim team I found out I was the same as everyone else. No one cared that I could barely read or write. No one laughed that I was a lousy swimmer. For the first time in my life, I felt accepted for myself. I believe that acceptance gave me the determination to become the best swimmer I could. It also taught me how to be a friend and not judge others by what they cannot do.

The arms raised represent "joy" and realizing our ultimate goal. All goals should be challenging but reasonable. I have reached my goal of learning to swim, but now I have raised the bar and will advocate for a better state swim program. I reached my goal to be an assistant coach, but I challenge myself to help other athletes reach their goal of learning to dribble a basketball. I continue to work on my reading and writing skills, but I have become a Special Olympics Global Messenger and have spoken to crowds of more than 600 people.

The five people represent the five continents involved in Special Olympics at the time the logo was made. The people are placed in a circle to represent the world. It is pretty overwhelming to think when you look at the globe, there are Special Olympic athletes and volunteers in almost every country; people who are like you and me.

Remember; don't always take the easy path. Challenge yourself each day.