

HEALTH OPPORTUNITIES

Vision

Through local and statewide health opportunities, SOWI's vision is to create communities where Special Olympics athletes and others with intellectual disability have the same access to health and wellness resources – and can attain the same level of good health – as others in their community.

Healthy Athletes

How it works

SOWI offers free screenings for athletes attending various State competitions in Special Smiles®, Healthy Hearing, Lion's Club International Opening Eyes®, Fun Fitness, Fit Feet, Health Promotion and MedFest®. To be eligible to participate in these programs, athletes or their guardians sign *The Special Olympics Participant Release form*. The athlete must also have a current *Athlete Medical Form* on file at the Headquarters office. Athletes do not have to be participating at the Games in order to take advantage of Healthy Athletes. Any athlete with a current medical on file at the Headquarters office can participate.

The providers (physicians, physician assistant, nurse practitioners, dentists, dental hygienists, optometrists, opticians, physical therapists, audiologists, podiatrists, dieticians, registered nurses and more) see the athletes in an environment familiar to them and perform exams in a setting among the athlete's peers. The potentially nerve-wracking experience of seeing a doctor is well received by the majority of athletes in this setting.

Added Benefits

While athletes are certainly the focus of this program, medical professionals and students are given an opportunity to teach each other techniques for screening members of this population. Many of the volunteers have been deeply impacted by their experience.

Healthy Athletes Disciplines Offered

Fit Feet: Fit Feet was developed in collaboration with the American Academy of Podiatric Sports Medicine to evaluate and screen foot and ankle deformities of athletes and to provide education in proper footwear and care of the feet and toenails.

FUNfitness: Physical therapy professionals provide screening and education on flexibility, functional strength, and balance and advise athletes on good fitness programs for risk prevention and for optimal function in sports training and competition.

Health Promotion: Professionals educate athletes about nutrition and exercise, as well as bone health, smoking cessation and sun safety using interactive activities and motivational information to encourage behavior change. Blood pressure and bone mineral density screenings are also available at Health Promotions.

Healthy Hearing: Audiologists assess athlete hearing and provide external ear canal inspection, evoked otoacoustic emissions screening, tympanometry and pure tone screening for those with identified need. Referrals may include further testing of middle ear problems or management of hearing loss or hearing aids, molded ear plugs or earwax removal.

Lions Club International Opening Eyes: Opening Eyes brings eye care professionals in to offer vision health tests and possible refraction, prescription eyeglasses, prescription protective sports eyewear, and referral for follow-up care.

Special Smiles: Dental professionals provide screenings, health education and prevention services, and refer athletes for follow-up care. Fitted mouth guards and fluoride varnish are offered to athletes. Funding for Special Smiles is provided by Delta Dental of Wisconsin, Inc.

MedFest: Programs conduct standard sports physicals required for participation in Special Olympics events. These screenings permit new athletes to register and assure continued eligibility of existing athletes.

For more information on Healthy Athletes, visit SpecialOlympicsWisconsin.org, or contact the Director of Health Programs.

2016-2017 Healthy Athlete dates and locations:

November 12, 2016 – MedFest and Special Smiles at Dales Weston Lanes in Schofield

April 8, 2017 – Fun Fitness, Healthy Hearing, Opening Eyes and Special Smiles offered at the State Indoor Sports Tournament at UW Oshkosh

June 9, 2017 – Health Promotion, Opening Eyes and Special Smiles offered at State Summer Games at UW Stevens Point

June 10, 2017 – Healthy Hearing offered on Saturday of State Summer Games at UW Stevens Point

August 5, 2017 – Fit Feet, Health Promotions and Special Smiles offered at the State Outdoor Sports Tournament at Carroll University in Waukesha

All athletes are welcome to visit Healthy Athletes! They do not have to be competing at the Games in order to take advantage of the services and give-a-ways at Healthy Athlete events. Any athlete with a current medical on file at the Headquarters office can participate.