

Athlete Leadership Program

Special Olympics Ontario is committed to ensuring that athletes participate in all key areas of the organization through athlete empowerment initiatives. Athlete empowerment is not a new concept to Special Olympics Ontario. In fact, supporting athlete empowerment initiatives simply expands Special Olympics Ontario's commitment to athlete development. In 1965, Frank Hayden proved through research that individuals with intellectual disabilities have the ability to reach optimal levels of health and deserve opportunities to participate in sports. From the beginning, Special Olympics Ontario has been committed to helping athletes reach excellence in sports. Empowerment is meant to develop the inner excellence of an athlete's character by giving them the opportunity to foster their drive for self-achievement.

All across the province, athletes are demonstrating athletic ability combined with leadership skills. Whether volunteering at school competitions, as athlete committee members, as community council representatives, as volunteer coaches or public speakers, they are proving that people with intellectual disabilities are vibrant, active, talented members of the Special Olympics Ontario clubs and communities in which they participate.

Special Olympics Ontario provides opportunities for an athlete to realize empowerment through:

- Experiencing greater control over their lives
- Allowing athletes to provide critical feedback for programming
- Putting their thoughts into action
- Interacting within the Special Olympics Ontario environment in an empowering manner
- Exercising personal responsibility within the Special Olympics Ontario community

