



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **Spread the Word for Inclusion this month with Special Olympics Wisconsin**

**Madison, Wis.** - Join Special Olympics Wisconsin during the month of March as they highlight the [Spread the Word >> Inclusion](#) campaign and signal to fellow Wisconsinites that inclusion is the way forward.

This annual partnership between **Special Olympics, Best Buddies International** and supporters from around the world invites all people to commit to individual acts of inclusion. Special Olympics Wisconsin is inviting all residents of Wisconsin to commit to inclusion by [signing their Inclusion Pledge](#).

### **Connection**

Given this past year and the dramatic effects that isolation and exclusion have had on us on an individual and community level, this year's focus of Spread the Word >> Inclusion centers on the importance of connection.

A pandemic, physical distancing, powerful reminders of overdue action needed for justice and equity, disruptions to the building blocks of social interaction and more have both energized and exhausted us. Having listened to and reflected on the experiences of the grassroots leaders of the Spread the Word campaign, Special Olympics believes it is more important than ever to build connection through inclusion.

The global campaign highlights divisions that have led to social isolation and exclusion among individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) all over the world. The 200 million people with IDD represent every country, belief system, sexual orientation, gender expression, race, and ethnicity.

The Spread the Word >> Inclusion campaign marks an opportunity for all communities to come together, take stock and recognize the advances made – and the advancement still left to do.

As is typically the case during this annual campaign, **Wisconsin's schools are spearheading the movement toward inclusion.**

“Teachers and students across Wisconsin are getting incredibly creative with engaging their schools and communities in safe and fun ways this year for Spread the Word >> Inclusion. Activations range from social media takeovers, schools sending testimonial videos out to students, and spirit weeks centered on inclusion and how each student can make their school more welcoming for all,” said Erin Muehlenkamp, Special Olympics Wisconsin's Director of Unified Programs. “Once again, students across the state are leading the charge on creating inclusive and accepting environments. This is something that should really make all of us in Wisconsin incredibly proud.”

### **How you can show that inclusion matters to you**

#### **Special Olympics Wisconsin**

2310 Crossroads Drive, Suite 1000, Madison, WI 53718 | (608) 222-1324 | [SpecialOlympicsWisconsin.org](http://SpecialOlympicsWisconsin.org) | [info@specialolympicswisconsin.org](mailto:info@specialolympicswisconsin.org)  
*Special Olympics Wisconsin, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization supported almost entirely through corporate funding and individual gifts.  
Created by the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation for the benefit of persons with intellectual disabilities*



You can help Special Olympics Wisconsin strengthen connections and show the power of inclusion in Wisconsin in multiple ways:

- [Take the Pledge](#): Make your own commitment to spread inclusion. Help Special Olympics Wisconsin reach 500 pledges throughout the month!
- **Spread the Word**: After you've taken the pledge, spread the word so others do too. Share about your pledge on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram and tag [@sowisconsin](#) and [@PledgeToInclude](#). You can even add the Special Olympics Wisconsin [inclusion frame](#) to your Facebook profile throughout the month of March.
- [Submit a Video](#): Tell Special Olympics Wisconsin how you will Spread the Word >> Inclusion!
- [Gear up for Inclusion](#): Bring the message of inclusion wherever you go with the official 2021 "Inclusion No Matter the Distance" t-shirt. People who sign the pledge will also receive a promo code to receive 10% off on the t-shirt.

Formerly known as the Spread the Word to End the Word, this campaign has been working to spread respect and inclusion since 2009 by addressing the excluding and demeaning impact of the words "retard(ed)." In 2019, the campaign's new form – Spread the Word >> Inclusion – began building on the success of the first 10 years by challenging everyone to commit to creating socially inclusive spaces for all.

### **Contacts**

Erin Muehlenkamp  
Director of Unified Programs  
[emuehlenkamp@specialolympicswisconsin.org](mailto:emuehlenkamp@specialolympicswisconsin.org)  
(608) 442-5679

Tommy Jaime  
Director of Communications  
[tjaime@specialolympicswisconsin.org](mailto:tjaime@specialolympicswisconsin.org)  
(608) 442-5675

### **About Special Olympics Wisconsin**

Special Olympics Wisconsin is a statewide organization of the Special Olympics movement that unleashes the transformative power and joy of sports everyday around the world. Through work in sports, health, education and community building, Special Olympics has been empowering people with intellectual disabilities for more than 50 years, leading to a more welcoming and inclusive society. With the support of donors, coaches and volunteers, Special Olympics Wisconsin provides year-round sports training and more than 150 athletic events in 19 Olympic-type sports to 9,000 individuals with intellectual disabilities. Join our online community by following us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#)! For more information, visit [SpecialOlympicsWisconsin.org](http://SpecialOlympicsWisconsin.org) or call (608) 222-1324.

### **About Best Buddies International**

Best Buddies® is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to establishing a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment, leadership development and inclusive living for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Founded in 1989 by Anthony K. Shriver, Best Buddies is a vibrant organization that has grown from one original chapter to nearly 3,000 elementary school, middle school, high school, and college Friendship and Promoter chapters worldwide. Today, Best Buddies' nine formal programs — Middle Schools, High Schools, Colleges, Citizens, e-Buddies®, Jobs, Ambassadors, Promoters and Inclusive Living— engage participants in each of the 50 states and in 56 countries and territories, positively impacting the lives of over 1.3 million people with and without disabilities around the world. In many cases, as a result of their involvement with Best Buddies, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities secure rewarding jobs, live independently, become inspirational leaders



and build lifelong friendships. For more information, please visit [www.bestbuddies.org](http://www.bestbuddies.org) or connect with us via Facebook, Instagram or Twitter.

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