

## Health Leadership Awards

Special Olympics Ireland is delighted to present Lynda Mc Givney-Nolan and KARE with the Golisano Health Leadership Awards.

The Golisano Health Leadership Award is presented by Special Olympics International and the Golisano Foundation, and is awarded nationally to outstanding individuals and organisations dedicated to improving the health of people with intellectual disabilities and advancing the health of Special Olympics athletes.

Lynda Mc Givney-Nolan and KARE are the first Irish recipients of the Golisano Health Leadership Award, they will now be nominated for the global award, which will be presented at the 2019 Special Olympics World Games in Abu Dhabi.

The Health Leadership Awards give Special Olympics Ireland the opportunity to acknowledge the great health work that is taking place throughout the island of Ireland at a local community level.

“This supports our goal as an organisation to make health programmes and resources more accessible to our athletes & people with an intellectual disability at a community level. Overall having a positive impact on the day to day health and wellbeing of our athletes” *Cáit Donnelly Health & Wellbeing Coordinator Special Olympics Ireland*

### Lynda Mc Givney-Nolan

Lynda Mc Givney-Nolan has been a health leader with Special Olympics Ireland since 2000 when she took on the role of Opening Eyes Clinical Director, and attended training in Alaska at the World Winter Games in 2001. Lynda then completed follow-up training in Washington in 2002 at an International Symposium on Healthy Athletes.

Lynda played a key role for the 2003 World Summer Games where the Opening Eyes programme screened in excess of 1,000 athletes in one week, and she continues to lead the Opening Eyes programme in Ireland since then at national level.

Opening Eyes is one of the 7 disciplines offered in the Healthy Athlete programme which offers eye exams to athletes. During this screening athletes receive new prescription glasses or sport lenses free of charge if required. Recommendations for future follow-up visits are also provided.

Lynda received the Golisano Health Leadership Award based on her work in developing and leading the **Sports Goggles initiative**. “This initiative allowed us to identify athletes who required prescription sports goggles to take part in their chosen sport and perform at their best” *Lynda Mc Givney-Nolan Opening Eyes Clinical Director*

Funding was identified to support the programme and Lynda identified appropriately qualified optometrists across the country who would honour the vouchers issued to athletes.

She completed further qualification in University of Coleraine in Special Needs Optometry in 2014, and became an accredited Down Syndrome Specialist practitioner. There are only 8 of these specialists in the Republic of Ireland.



This is a great example of accessible follow up care taking place outside of Healthy Athlete events in local communities across the country. This helps to create a strong network of passionate healthcare professionals who are delighted to work with Special Olympics Ireland and welcome Special Olympics Ireland athletes.



*Pictured above: Matt English CEO Special Olympics Ireland, Lynda Mc Givney-Nolan Opening Eyes Clinical Director and Cáit Donnelly Health & Wellbeing Coordinator Special Olympics Ireland*

## **KARE**

KARE was established in 1967 by parents and friends of children with an intellectual disability. They wanted their children to be able to live at home and go to a local school. KARE still want to help people with an intellectual disability to live a good life in their local communities.

They provide opportunities to be involved in sport through their organisational programmes. They also support their athletes to become a part of Special Olympics Ireland Community Clubs and have always valued and understood the far reaching benefits of exercise and health programmes for their services users and Special Olympics athletes and they are uniquely placed to create a supportive environment to enhance positive lifestyle choices.

KARE with support from Special Olympics Ireland (through the Special Olympics Ireland Health Promotion Programme and the Fit 5 resources) have developed **Healthy4LIVING** programme for their service users and have incorporated a lot of these health benefits, for example:

1. Exercise Outdoors – Fend of Depression, aids personal mental health, green and natural. Environment is the best, exercise promotes blood flow to the brain, Promotes physical health
2. Eat right – good balanced diet
3. Prioritise time for relaxation
4. Sleep well – to clear out the brain, recharge the battery
5. Friendships & Socialising – building network of friends to share experiences
6. Activities for the elderly – ‘League of Health’, ‘Move to the Groove’
7. Incorporating measures into programme to measure benefits.

**Healthy4Living** programme provides Special Olympics Athletes and KARE service users with accessible information to support positive health behaviours within a supportive environment. Through their organisational project “Supporting Healthy Lives” they have also now developed an online resource library and information website that is accessible to all staff and service users.

“It’s all about empowering people with an intellectual disability with the skills and knowledge to be more involved in their lifestyle choices.” *Eamonn Quirke Healthy4LIVING programme lead with KARE*

**Healthy4LIVING** programme is a 12 month programme which started in 2017 ensuring athletes can continue to make healthy choices outside their Special Olympics Club which increases sustainability of health protective behaviours for overall health & wellbeing in day to day living.



*Pictured above: Matt English CEO Special Olympics Ireland, Eamonn Quirke **Healthy4LIVING** programme lead with KARE and Cáit Donnelly Health & Wellbeing Coordinator Special Olympics Ireland*