



Special Olympics Ireland

Annual Review

2019



**Special
Olympics**
Ireland

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**Special
Olympics**
Ireland

Brendan Whelan
Chairman



Chairman's Introduction

Not a year goes by without momentous achievements by the Special Olympics Community and 2019 was no exception. Across the island of Ireland, volunteers are working tirelessly so that our athletes receive the best coaching and training conditions enabling them to reach their full potential. Staff are also working hard across the Special Olympics regional and central offices providing support, direction and opportunities for both volunteers and athletes. The annual review is always a great time to look back and reflect on how much has been achieved over the previous year.

Looking back at 2019, the highlight has to be the Special Olympics World Summer Games, which took place in Abu Dhabi and Dubai in March. These Games, the first to be hosted in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, were a perfect illustration of how the Special Olympics movement continues to open hearts and minds as we strive for inclusion through sport.

The Team Ireland delegation of 130 people, 91 athletes supported by a coaching and management team of 39, competed across 12 sports. In addition 74 Special Olympics Ireland volunteers travelled to Abu Dhabi supporting not only the running of the Games but also fundraising to support the local programme across the country of Ireland too.

As we have come to learn from other sporting events, our supporters travel in droves, never forgetting to pack their relentless optimism and passionate support for their beloved athletes. United Arab Emirates was no different with Team Ireland being one of, if not the best supported Teams at the Games. The significant number of enthusiastic supporters from the island of Ireland was noted very positively by the host delegation on more than one occasion.

As usual, our athletes performed with exceptional pride and passion and returned home with an outstanding 86 medals. The Team's performance off the field of play was also something to admire, the sportsmanship and friendship they extended towards their competitors was something to be proud of and embodies what Special Olympics is truly about.



Chairman's Introduction *(continued)*

Closer to home our regions also continued to make significant progress in many areas benefitting our athletes. The island of Ireland is home to 294 affiliated clubs boasting 7,895 registered athletes. In 2019 we welcomed 700 new athletes into our community and look forward to watching them become long-term members.

We continue to raise the bar when it comes to coaching standards. Courses and workshops were delivered across a wide range of sports, and Sport Ireland's Coaching Children courses will help contribute to our thriving Young Athletes™ programme.

Beyond sport our Health and Wellbeing programme continues to flourish. In 2019, Special Olympics Ireland received the Healthy Communities Recognition Award from Special Olympics International. This award is so well deserved by the team who are constantly reviewing the way we educate our community about health, not just through sport but by taking care of our mental health, nutritional advice and building healthy habits.

"When talking about the success of our athletes... it's crucial to acknowledge the support we receive from our partners and sponsors."

When talking about the success of our athletes, clubs, volunteer recruitment plans, coaching achievements, and Health and Wellbeing programmes it's crucial to acknowledge the support we receive from our partners and sponsors. Sport Ireland, Sport Northern Ireland and Pobal are all owed a special thanks. During 2019 we were very pleased to sign a four year agreement with Rethink Ireland (formerly Social Innovation Fund Ireland) and are looking forward to working closely with them. We are thrilled to continue affiliations with our loyal partners; eir, Gala Retail, and Johnson & Johnson Group. JP McManus and the Iris O'Brien foundation offer continued support and commitment to Special Olympics. Kerry Group, Microsoft, DELL, Ulster Bank and Bank of America provide notable support to many of our plans and programmes.

Reflecting upon the last year always culminates in a feeling of immense gratitude. To each one of our volunteers who donate time, energy and expertise to help our athletes pursue their dreams- I sincerely thank you. To our athletes, I want to wish you a huge congratulations on another momentous year of sport. We are continually inspired by your pride and passion and look forward to many great years ahead as we continue to develop our 2025 strategy.



Brendan Whelan,
Chairman



Athlete Roundup

Through our clubs and associated programmes our athletes learn to keep physically, mentally and emotionally fit. They get to learn new skills, increase confidence and most importantly they get to experience the joy of sport and make life-long friendships. Everyone who is part of Special Olympics Ireland works and volunteers for the benefit of our athletes and to bring the joy of sport to people all over the island of Ireland.

Athlete Numbers

By Region

Ulster
1,811

Connaught
1,191

Eastern
1,858

Leinster
1,221

Munster
1,814

Total
7,895



New Athlete Registrations:

Connaught 105
Eastern 143
Leinster 95
Munster 151
Ulster 206
Total = 700

Athlete Age Profiles:

801 aged 4-11
815 aged 12-15
1,343 aged 16-21
1,529 aged 22-29
1,471 aged 30-39
1,936 aged 40+

Athlete Gender:

Male 64%
Female 36%

Athlete Leadership

Athlete Leadership encourages athletes to develop skills that will empower them to be advocates for all athletes and act as a leader for Special Olympics.

Registered participants 643

New Athletes 58

Workshops 30



Special Olympics
Young Athletes™

Young Athletes™ Programme

The Young Athletes™ programme proudly sponsored by eir and Pobal is a play programme for children age 4-12 years. It develops key fundamental movement skills and instills healthy habits in children with intellectual disabilities. It also offers their parents an insight into the support network that can be gained from joining a Special Olympics Club.

Number of active Young Athletes™ in 2019

287

Number of new Young Athletes™ in 2019

118

Number of Young Athletes™ clubs in 2019

25

Number of new Young Athletes™ clubs in 2019

3

Number of existing clubs who adopted Young Athletes™ programme in 2019

5



The programme has blossomed into one of the core offerings of Special Olympics Ireland. After much success in 2018 it was crucial to scale the programme strategically to ensure success and growth across the island of Ireland.



Special Olympics
Young Athletes™

"It's amazing to have an environment where the activities are tailored to children with Intellectual Disabilities, other clubs are very inclusive but having specially trained volunteers who know how to get the best out of the children really adds to their confidence and enjoyment"

- Parent of Young Athlete
in Donabate-Portrane Special Olympics Club



Special Olympics
Young Athletes™



Spotlight on: Titanic Tigers Special Olympics Club

Titanic Tigers was officially launched in August 2019. It was the first Young Athletes™ club to be officially opened in Northern Ireland.

The club was established by a group of parents who wanted to give their children the opportunity to enjoy activities in a familiar, supportive and fun environment. Club secretary Susan Gillen, mother of club member Ross aged 4, explained:

"There was nothing in the area geared towards our children's needs and supporting them in developing fundamental movement skills like throwing, catching, jumping and balancing.

"So we decided to investigate setting up our own club with support from Special Olympics Ulster after attending a Young Athletes™ taster event.

Susan added: "The feedback from parents has been great with everyone agreed that it is a fantastic opportunity for young children with intellectual disabilities and their parents to socialise together and benefit from the support network that Special Olympics provides.

"Ross has certainly enjoyed every minute of developing his movement skills and making new friends."



Sport Roundup

Following the success of our athletes in Abu Dhabi it's encouraging to watch our sport leagues grow from strength to strength. By driving for inclusion through sport we are proud to offer a diverse range of sports and activities so all athlete members can find a community and a sport that suits their abilities and ambitions.

Basketball

929

Bowling

820

Bocce

614

Football

435

Swimming

415

Floorball

209

Athletics

85

Badminton

35

Golf

33

Table Tennis

24

Special Feature:

The Special Olympics World Summer Games

Abu Dhabi

14th March - 21st March 2019

Special Olympics has proudly demonstrated its mission to drive inclusivity by bringing sport to all corners of the world. The 2019 World Summer Games was the first Summer Games to be held in the Middle East and North Africa Region. The scale of these Games were certainly ambitious with 500,000 spectators, 20,000 volunteers and 6,000 families and friends registered to attend, not to mention the 7,500 athletes from 190 countries set to compete across 24 sports.

They were supported by a coaching and management team of 39. In addition 74 volunteers from Ireland also travelled bringing their extensive volunteering experience and unlimited energy towards supporting these Games.

The excitement of experiencing a new culture and a very different climate required immense preparation and it's safe to say that the experience of the Team's departure from Dublin Airport left us under no illusion that these Games were going to be special.



SPECIAL OLYMPICS
WORLD GAMES
ABU DHABI 2019

الأولمبياد الخاص
العالمية
أبوظبي 2019

Special Feature:

The Special Olympics World Summer Games



Throughout the Games, Team Ireland's management team rose to the occasion and oversaw a strategic plan to ensure our athletes and volunteers alike were confident and prepared for the exciting journey ahead.

There were many highlights throughout the Games; Gymnast Eimear Gannon was given the honour of reciting the Athlete's Oath to officially open competition. She also got a huge shock when American singer and Special Olympics Global ambassador, Nicole Scherzinger joined in a flash mob dance at the Gymnastics closing ceremony. March 17th or St. Patrick's Day was also another very special highlight as school children from across Abu Dhabi and Dubai came out to cheer our athletes on as they competed. Check out the highlights [here](#).

On the last day of competition, the spotlight was on the football team as they had battled through a week of tough matches to finally secure their hard-earned bronze medal. In the afternoon attention turned towards our golfers who all secured medals and amongst them was Mairead Moroney, of Ennis Special Olympics Golf Club, who at 69 years young, took to the podium to claim her silver medal. Get a feel for the electric atmosphere of this final day of competition [here](#).

As the Games ended and the Team arrived back into Dublin Airport on March 22nd, carrying a sensational medal haul of 86. Upon arrival there was no time for tiredness as they were greeted by rapturous applause from family, friends and fans, who turned out in huge numbers from right across the island of Ireland to welcome them home.



Special Feature:

The Special Olympics World Summer Games

For some it was a speedy turnaround as they landed in Dublin airport and headed directly to RTÉ to make an appearance on the Late Late Show with Special Olympics ambassador Colin Farrell. Again, it's safe to say that the team outshone the Hollywood star as the audience gave the Team a standing ovation.



Team Ireland
in Numbers:

Delegation Size

130

Athletes

91

Coaches and
Management
Team

39

Sports

12



حفل التتويج
Award Ceremony

الرياضيين
Athlete Entrance



SPECIAL OLYMPICS
WORLD GAMES
ABU DHABI 2019

الأولمبياد الخاص
الألعاب
العالمية
أبوظبي 2019



30
Gold

29
Silver

27
Bronze

4th Place = 25

5th Place = 7

6th Place = 10

7th Place = 2

8th Place = 2

Participation ribbons = 3

10 personal bests across
Athletics and Swimming

World Games in Numbers



7,000
Special Olympics Athletes

20,000
Volunteers



24
Sports

500,000
Spectators



2,600
Coaches

2,000
Members of the
World's Media



6,000
Family Members

Clubs Roundup

Our clubs are the stronghold of the Special Olympics ethos. The welcoming environment allows athletes to train in a space designed for them. Our clubs are the engine of the organisation and their earnest work allows us to roll out our sport curriculum and support programmes to as many members as possible.

With a total of 294 clubs throughout Ireland we are proud to service more athletes each year and hope to see this number rise as our community grows.

Region:

Connaught

60

Eastern

70

Leinster

45

Munster

60

Ulster

59

Club Type

Community Clubs

209

Services

66

Special Schools

19

Health Promotion

Clubs engaged in Health Promotion programme

144

Volunteers

2019 saw a focused recruitment drive for volunteers across all areas of the organisation. An impressive 1,809 new volunteers were added to our network. As 2019 was the year of a World Summer Games it was crucial that all volunteers received the highest training possible to aid Team Ireland while at the Games and from Ireland.

20,705
Registered Volunteers

6,189
Active Registered Volunteers
(4,742 clubs)
(1,447 competition)

1,809
New Volunteers

74
Travelling volunteers for World Games



Spotlight on: Volunteers recognised in The Federation of Irish Sports 'Volunteer in Sport' Awards

The Volunteers in Sport Awards were created by the Federation of Irish Sport to recognise the contributions, commitment and dedication of the 450,000 volunteers who give their time to Irish sport each year. This equates to approximately 37.3 million hours of volunteering across Ireland's 14,000 registered sports clubs and associations. Members of the public, sports clubs and governing bodies were invited to nominate an individual whose contributions to sport has made a real difference to their community, club or county.

Special Olympics Ireland were proud to have three volunteers receive an award: Mary Davitt from Navan Arch Club, Yvonne Tierney from Ballinamere Special Olympics Club and Shirley MacDermott for her contribution to the Special Olympics Ireland Equestrian programme in Event/Competition Management, Coaching and Judging/ Officiating. A massive well done and we would like to extend our warmest thanks to ALL our volunteers who continue to inspire and drive the organisation forwards and inspire us on a daily basis.



Coaching

Special Olympics Ireland is dedicated to ensuring our athletes receive the most qualified coaching available. It's important what we create an environment of education and progression amongst our coaching community to encourage upskilling where possible. Every year we run workshops and partnerships with Sport Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland Coaching and during 2019 we were delighted to see that three people achieved Level 2 Coach Developer training.

"It's so important, as a coach, to have a personal progression plan. Constantly upskilling will have a positive ripple effect on other coaches who join your club and of course the athletes you train"

Angie Griffin

Coach, Galway Special Olympics Club
and Galway Special Olympics Young
Athlete Club

27
Coaching Courses

39
Volunteers took Sport Ireland's
Coaching Children course to support
Young Athletes™ Programme

3
Volunteers achieved Coach
Developer Level 2

Money:

Where does the money come from?

We receive core funding from governments in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The support we receive from Sport Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland are instrumental in helping us develop our core sports programme and build a community based on sport and its merits.

Sport Ireland
Sport Northern Ireland
Department of Social Protection/CE Scheme



HSE
Pobal
Ulster Health Board
BOAML

eir
Gala Retail
Johnson and Johnson
Kerry Group

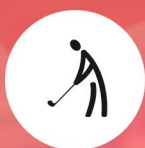
Rethink Ireland
Iris O'Brien Foundation
JP McManus Benevolent Fund
Law Enforcement Torch Run



Money:

Where does the money come from?

In 2019 donations-in-kind were valued at €531,622. This on-going support for Special Olympics Ireland always leaves us humbled and extremely grateful. Our calendar year is a timeline of fundraising events that encompass the generous spirit of our community and the people across the island of Ireland. Some of our key events include:



€567,000

Collection Day



€82,208

Polar Plunge



€29,422

Cops 'n' Donuts

(Supported by Law Enforcement Torch Run)



€16,017

Super Hero Day

Money:

Where does the money go?

Sports Competitions

€1,529,008

26%

Fundraising and Sponsorship

€982,468

17%

Clubs Programme

€947,618

16%

Games

€756,592

13%

Sports training and development

€605,245

10%

Donations

In-kind

€531,622

9%

Health Programme

€337,098

6%

Special Projects

€199,606

3%



Web Details



Web visitors:
53,012



Facebook
51,361 likes



Twitter
14,498 followers



Instagram
3,845 followers



YouTube
52,529 views



LinkedIn
3,411

Total Advertising
Value Equivalent (AVE)
€3.36 million

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