



Lions Clubs International
FOUNDATION

Special Olympics



“MISSION: INCLUSION”

TWO DECADES OF INCLUSION THROUGH SERVICE FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

CHICAGO, 1 July 2021: As part of a shared commitment to supporting those most in need, Lions Clubs International Foundation (LCIF) and Special Olympics International (Special Olympics) are celebrating two decades of kindness and inclusion through service as part of a growing global partnership. Both organizations announced the milestone celebration during Lions Clubs International’s virtual International Convention in late June.

The LCIF-Special Olympics partnership began in 2001 with the international expansion of the Special Olympics Lions Clubs International Opening Eyes program (Opening Eyes), an eye health and vision screening program made available to participating athletes and people with intellectual disabilities in general at Special Olympics events worldwide. Through the support of industry leaders, including Essilor International, Safilo Group and Liberty Sport, the Opening Eyes program provides corrective prescription eyewear, UV-protected sunglasses and protective sports eyewear. Since the Opening Eyes program inception, more than 445,000 vision and eye health assessments have been conducted, and more than 260,000 prescription eyeglasses have been provided to athletes at no cost.

In 2013, LCIF and Special Olympics expanded the partnership to include additional areas of service and inclusion, creating an expansive partnership platform, “Mission: Inclusion,” which offers family health education, inclusive sports, refugee programming, leadership and national partnership development, club creation and development and more. Through this expansion, Special Olympics and LCIF, together with local Lions clubs and national Special Olympics organizations, work in communities in some 100 nations to improve and empower the lives of individuals with intellectual disabilities. Together, the organizations continue to demonstrate the transformative power of inclusive development to one of the most marginalized populations in the world.

“LCIF is proud to celebrate 20 years of service in support of Special Olympics athletes,” said Gudrun Yngvadottir, whose term as LCIF chairperson came to a close June 30. “Individuals with intellectual disabilities often face deep social isolation, discrimination and stigmatization, which have regrettably deepened for many during the pandemic. Together with Special Olympics, we continue to witness the positive and transformative power that kindness and inclusion through service can have – not only on Special Olympics athletes, but on the entire community. As part of the 20th anniversary celebration, Lions International encourages everyone worldwide to commit to acts of kindness and inclusion.”

Special Olympics Chairman Dr. Timothy Shriver said, “The movement of Special Olympics is immensely grateful to Lions Clubs International Foundation, and the over one million Lions Clubs members throughout the world who give of themselves to improve and enrich the lives of our athletes. For over two decades, Lions have shown the Special Olympics community what it means to serve, to make kindness the focus, and to build bridges of compassion. At a time in human history when we remain so divided and distant, Lions Clubs International Foundation and its global network of community leaders continue to empower the lives

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Created by the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation for the benefit of persons with intellectual disabilities



of our athletes and families for the better. ‘Mission: Inclusion’ has become a definitive cornerstone of our work across the world, and for that we extend our deep gratitude to Lions worldwide.”

LCIF and Special Olympics wish to expand “Mission: Inclusion” to all nations as part of a concerted effort to strengthen inclusive development programming for those most in need, further strengthen the urgency of service for marginalized populations including individuals with intellectual disabilities and support a shared commitment to achieving the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals.

About Special Olympics

[Founded in 1968](#), Special Olympics is a global movement to end discrimination against people with intellectual disabilities. We foster acceptance of all people through the power of sport and programming in education, health, and leadership. With more than six million athletes and Unified Sports partners in over [190 countries and territories](#) and more than one million coaches and volunteers, Special Olympics delivers [more than 30 Olympic-type sports](#) and over [100,000 games and competitions](#) every year. Engage with us on: [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [our blog on Medium](#). Learn more at www.SpecialOlympics.org.

About Lions Clubs International Foundation

[Lions Clubs International Foundation](#) (LCIF) is the charitable arm of Lions Clubs International. Established in 1968, LCIF provides grant funding to support the compassionate works of Lions, empowering their service and addressing the needs of their communities both locally and globally. Since 1968, LCIF has awarded more than 16,000 grants totaling more than US\$1.1 billion. To donate to LCIF, visit lionsclubs.org/donate. Connect with [LCIF on Facebook](#) or online at lionsclubs.org/LCIF. To learn how to support LCIF, visit lionsclubs.org/WaysToGive.