



PRESS RELEASE

Lions Clubs International Foundation Makes \$8.8 Million Commitment to Special Olympics

19 July 2018 | CHICAGO, IL (USA): As part of the Special Olympics 50th Anniversary celebrations in Chicago, Illinois (USA), Lions Clubs International Foundation (LCIF) announced its intent to commit \$8.8 million to Special Olympics, expanding the impact of both organizations' support to individuals with intellectual disabilities. The global partnership, titled "Mission: Inclusion," will continue to provide transformative services in the areas of vision care, health education, inclusive sports, leadership development, and youth activation all driving to create inclusive communities worldwide.

Harnessing the power of a 19-year collaboration, this commitment is part of a multi-year partnership plan that will continue to strengthen the relationship between Special Olympics, Lions Clubs International (LCI), and Lions Clubs International Foundation, which also celebrates its 50th Anniversary in 2018.

The announcement was made by LCI President Gudrun Yngvadottir at the Special Olympics International Board of Directors 50th Anniversary Celebratory Luncheon. Joined by Dr. Timothy Shriver, Chairman of Special Olympics, Mary Davis, Chief Executive Officer of Special Olympics, Lions Clubs International Director Aruna Oswal, Special Olympics athlete leader Kester Edwards, and Special Olympics International Board member Wing-Kun Tam, Yngvadottir spoke of the increased need of service and inclusion in a world increasingly divided.

"Since 2001, LCIF and countless Lions Clubs members have been champions of inclusion. Through vision care, education, family support, and Unified Sports activities, LCI has been a truly global and local service leader for people with ID," said Dr. Timothy P. Shriver, Chairman of Special Olympics. "Almost a quarter of Special Olympics athletes have never had an eye exam and close to 40% need a new prescription for eyeglasses. Through 'Mission: Inclusion', LCI and Special Olympics are poised to close this health gap and show the world what it means to be fully inclusive. As a Lion myself, I am incredibly proud and honored to be partners with the largest, most active, and most inclusive service club organization in the world."

LCI and LCIF have been one of the Special Olympics movement's largest and most active Global Partners since 2001, providing support to Special Olympics-Lions Clubs International Opening Eyes, as well as key initiatives such as the Special Olympics Unified Sports program, Special Olympics Family Health Forums, the Special Olympics Leadership Academy, and the ongoing shared commitment to full youth empowerment and activation. Together, Special Olympics and Lions Clubs International will work to bring inclusive development programming to countries throughout the world, and will work to create deeper ties between both organizations internationally as part of a renewed commitment to service and social inclusion.



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“I have had the pleasure, and privilege, of watching the Special Olympics-Lions Clubs International “Mission: Inclusion” partnership in action in countries throughout the world, including in my home country of Iceland,” said President Yngvadottir. “We as Lions Clubs members take very seriously the role of service in today’s world, and we are excited to continue this global collaboration to support Special Olympics athletes, their families, and all individuals with intellectual disabilities.”

In 2001, LCIF awarded Special Olympics a multi-year, multi-million dollar commitment in the expansion of the Opening Eyes vision screening program in 2001. Since then, the Foundation has provided over \$23 million to provide vision screenings and education for a population long denied access to quality health, social services, and community engagement. The support from LCIF goes well beyond financial support, as local Lions clubs provide some 15,000 volunteers annually to promote implementation of Special Olympics programming. The global “Mission: Inclusion” partnership is currently active in over 100 nations, and continues to expand.

About Special Olympics

Special Olympics is a global inclusion movement using sport, health, education and leadership programs every day around the world to end discrimination against and empower people with intellectual disabilities. [Founded in 1968](#), and celebrating its 50th Anniversary this year, the Special Olympics movement has grown to more than 5 million athletes and Unified partners in more than [170 countries](#). With the support of more than 1 million coaches and volunteers, Special Olympics delivers [32 Olympic-type sports](#) and over [108,000 games and competitions](#) throughout the year. Special Olympics is supported by individuals, foundations and partners, including Bank of America, the Christmas Records Trust, The Coca-Cola Company, ESPN, Essilor Vision Foundation, the Golisano Foundation, the Law Enforcement Torch Run® for Special Olympics, Lions Clubs International, Microsoft, Safilo Group, TOYOTA, United Airlines, and The Walt Disney Company. [Click here for a full list of partners](#). Engage with us on: [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), [Instagram](#) and [our blog on Medium](#). Learn more at www.SpecialOlympics.org.

About Lions Clubs International Foundation

Lions Clubs International Foundation is the charitable arm of Lions Clubs International, the largest service club organization in the world with 1.4 million members in more than 200 geographic areas and countries. Since its founding in 1968, LCIF has awarded more than 13,000 grants totaling over US\$1 billion. Learn more online at www.lcif.org.

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