



## In The Field

Chih Hua Liu, a figure skater from Taiwan, developed pain in his left eye and nausea as he prepared to compete at the Special Olympics World Winter Games. The results of Liu's eye exam, however, surprised even the veteran volunteer doctors working the Healthy Athletes events, and they immediately called for an ambulance to take Liu to the emergency room. He had extremely high intraocular pressure. The pressure in the eye is typically in the teens or low 20s. Liu's was 68!

**"This was an acute medical emergency, one that could have resulted in permanent blindness if untreated,"** said Dr. Matthew Holder, a medical advisor for Healthy Athletes. Because it was discovered and treated, Liu's pressure went down and he was able to compete. After returning home, his health remained normal.

**"That is why we are here – to help athletes like that,"** said Dr. Jack Zarybnisky, the volunteer who discovered Liu's condition.



Opening Eyes is changing lives in communities across the globe, providing free eye assessments, prescription eyewear, sunglasses and sports goggles to people with intellectual disabilities.

### IMPORTANCE AND IMPACT:

Opening Eyes screenings have found that a large percentage of Special Olympics athletes have untreated eye conditions.

**35% need new prescription glasses**

**15% have an eye disease**

**5% have never had an eye exam**

200,000 assessments performed in 80 participating countries globally.

100,000+ sunglasses, 90,000+ prescription eyewear, 20,000+ sports goggles distributed globally to Special Olympics athletes.

### GOALS:

1. Increase access to eye care for Special Olympics athletes, as well as all people with intellectual disabilities.
2. Raise eye care professionals' awareness of vision and eye health concerns of people with special needs, including difficulties involved in accessing treatment.
3. Provide a list of regional eye care providers who care for people with special needs to all athletes who participate in the program.
4. Develop a body of knowledge about vision and eye health of children and adults with special needs.

Thanks to the Opening Eyes global partners:



Lions Clubs International

**CONTACT: Drew Choules:** Regional Manager for Healthy Athletes Program of North America - E-mail: [dchoules@specialolympics.org](mailto:dchoules@specialolympics.org)  
**Paul Berman:** Senior Global Clinical Advisor - E-mail: [pbberman@focusyehealth.com](mailto:pbberman@focusyehealth.com)