



Through organized training and practical experiences, Athlete Leadership prepares athletes for meaningful positions of influence and leadership throughout the Special Olympics organization, both on and off the playing field. Athlete Leaders within all levels of our program have strong voices, a desire to get involved, and a better understanding of what their needs are and where we should be heading as an organization. With the proper training and coaching, athletes can lead us into the future.

Athlete Leadership Opportunities in Special Olympics Pennsylvania (SOPA) Include:

Athlete Leadership University: Training offered to Athlete Leaders three times a year to further their knowledge base and provide certification in the below:

- **Communications:** Global Messengers (trained as public speakers for Special Olympics)
- **Governance:** Athlete Representatives (trained as spokespersons for Special Olympics)
- **Health:** Health and Fitness Coordinators (trained to incorporate better health and fitness habits into their local program)
- **Sports:** Coaches (trained to help athletes that currently are, or want to become certified coaches, make the transition from a competitor to a coach)

Athlete Input Council/Athlete Input Survey: Opportunity for all competing athletes to share their input on the event and learn important information regarding Athlete Leadership.

Athlete Leadership Teams: Direct link between local program athletes and the local program management team.

Regional Input Council: Direct link between local program athletes and the SOPA Board of Directors.

Athletes Congress: Hosted every 2 years, is a forum to present recommendations to the Board of Directors for organizational change. Athlete Congress attendees must be trained Athlete Representatives.

Adults who have participated in Special Olympics are

2-5x

more likely to be employed than peers who have not been involved.

