Special Olympics Young Athletes® is an early childhood sports-play program for children aged 2 to 7 years old that includes games, songs and other fun physical activities.

Our young athletes learn basic sports skills like kicking and throwing a ball and playing with others, with and without disabilities. While young athletes practice their sports skills they gain motor skills like balance, flexibility, strength and coordination.

In a recent study, children with developmental delays who participated in a structured 8 week Young Athletes program showed significantly more motor development than those who did not participate. Not only that, but their teachers and parents also reported improved confidence, language skills, and social skills. Another benefit was families played more together at home and in the community.

The Young Athletes Program Offers:

- Families the chance to share in the success of their future athlete.
- An experience that will lead to an appreciation of fitness and sport for the whole family.
- Offers an inclusive program that promotes social development.
- Enables families to learn about the potential of their child through sport.

Here in Pennsylvania, we will grow Young Athletes in order to promote lifelong opportunities for inclusion and encourage fitness from an early age. Young Athletes will serve as an entry point into our sports programs, serving as a key means of recruiting the “next generation” of SOPA athletes.

We hope to offer Young Athletes programs in at least 15 local Programs by 2020. Expansion of Young Athletes will also help us increase the overall number of athletes we serve. Our goal is to serve at least 1,000 Young Athletes by the end of 2020.