

HELP SPECIAL OLYMPIANS GO FOR THE GOLD THROUGH STRACK & VAN TIL CHECKOUT CHALLENGE



Special Olympics
Indiana

Eunice Kennedy Shriver, sister of U.S. President John F. Kennedy, was a fierce advocate for people with intellectual disabilities. Motivated by sister Rosemary's intellectual disabilities, Shriver founded Camp Shriver in 1962, which ultimately became the Special Olympics. In 1968, her dream of the first International Games became a reality.

The journey for rights and acceptance for people with intellectual disabilities has made a great deal of progress since Shriver established the Special Olympics. Today, Northwest Indiana's active and thriving chapter continues that advocacy.

You can join the cause from Monday, Feb. 23, through Sunday, March 1, when Special Olympics Indiana – Lake County will be the beneficiary of Strack & Van Til's Checkout Challenge Round Up. Customers across the Region can round up their purchase to the nearest dollar when shopping at their local Strack & Van Til store with those extra funds donated to the organization.

Special Olympics Lake County Coordinator Teresa Parker says the organization will allocate 100% of the proceeds from the Strack & Van Til Round Up to its programming needs and related expenses including uniforms, equipment, transportation, fees, medals and awards.

According to the organization's website, Special Olympics Indiana – Lake County's mission is "to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, offering them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills

and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community." The site further defines Special Olympics Indiana – Lake County as "a volunteer-led, accredited local program providing opportunities for Special Olympics athletes in Lake County, Indiana, to participate in a wide variety of year-round sports, health, education and leadership programs designed to help end discrimination against and empower people with intellectual disabilities."

More than 300 athletes ranging in age from 8 to 76, with some athletes continuing into their 90s if they are physically able, take part in Special Olympics Indiana – Lake County events. Parker notes that 120 coaches and volunteers work closely with the athletes.

"Not only do the athletes show great sportsmanship, but they also help each other and cheer one another on. I've seen so many of them grow from this program," says Parker. "Special Olympics Indiana – Lake County has been instrumental in helping athletes forge friendships and create a support group for them and for their families."

The organization's year-round sports training and athletic competition include bowling, bocce ball, golf, powerlifting, volleyball, corn toss, walking club, basketball, track and field, softball, cycling, snowshoeing and Alpine skiing. The next plan on the group's agenda? Parker says they're looking to start a swimming program.

Athletes look forward to competing in Special Olympics Indiana – Lake County summer and winter games. In the summer, the group takes over Indiana State University in Terre Haute, staying in the dorms and competing in a three-day event. All participants must undergo

a physical examination before they can compete, as well as having their hearing, teeth, feet and eyes checked, often getting fit for glasses, if needed. Winter games span three days in Lawrenceburg, where athletes ski, snowshoe and tube.

The organization has its own golf team that tours the state, playing at a variety of golf courses. Participants in Special Olympics tournaments play four rounds of three-, six- or nine-hole golf, paired with a Unified Sports® partner and hitting every other ball. The team play allows athletes and Unified partners to develop basic golf skills, rules and etiquette together. Athletes can also take part in a golf tour of four courses throughout Indiana and can qualify directly for the state tournament without needing to play in sectionals.

Special Olympics Indiana – Lake County also sponsors Athlete Leadership University. Held at Butler University in Indianapolis, the program gives athletes an opportunity to earn degrees in Communications, Events, Governance, Health and Fitness, Sports, Technology and Visual Art.

The Athlete Leadership Council is composed of member athletes who meet and choose activities they want brought to the Lake County group.

Parker emphasizes that the partnership with Strack & Van Til has a significant impact. "I am so thankful for all that Strack & Van Til has done for Special Olympics Indiana – Lake County, and we also would like to thank all of the customers who donate," she says.

"We've been able to do so

much for our athletes because of the Round Up."

Many of the Special Olympics Indiana – Lake County athletes, Parker adds, are employed by Strack & Van Til Food Markets, which forges a stronger and special connection between the organization and the grocery chain.

Strack & Van Til continues its more than 96-year tradition of philanthropy by raising funds through the Checkout Challenge Round Up program to help organizations in the communities it serves throughout Northwest Indiana.

Strack & Van Til President Jeff Strack credits customer generosity and employee commitment for the success of the Checkout Challenge.

"We are so grateful to our customers, as they are the ones who give back to the community. Our stores, with the help of our employees, simply provide our customers with an outlet to give to some of their favorite local organizations," Strack explains.

Show your support for the special athletes at Special Olympics Indiana – Lake County by participating in Strack & Van Til's Checkout Challenge Round Up.

For more information on Special Olympics programs, to volunteer or to donate, visit soindiana-lakecounty.org. To learn more about Strack & Van Til's community involvement, visit strackandvantil.com/community.

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food market

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Checkout Challenge