



***Special  
Olympics***  
Newfoundland  
& Labrador



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anne Collins

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**Placentia Lions**  
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Vacant

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**Clarenville All Stars**  
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**Gander Wings**  
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**Exploits Hurricanes**  
Colleen Ryan, Pauline Price, Cathy Wicks

**Baie Verte Peninsula Strikers**  
Vacant

**Corner Brook Vikings**  
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**Bay St. George Bravehearts**  
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**Happy Valley-Goose Bay Howling Huskies**  
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Susan Collins, Chair



Let me win.  
But if I cannot win,  
let me be brave  
in the attempt.

-Special Olympics athlete oath

# EXECUTIVE REPORT

**Obstacles don't have to stop you. If you run into a wall, don't turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it."**

– Michael Jordan

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2020-2021 has been a year of starts and stops for Special Olympics in Newfoundland & Labrador (SONL) as we have weathered the Covid-19 Pandemic. We have strived to engage our athletes, coaches, and volunteers with virtual and in-person programming as public health restrictions have permitted.

In the Fall of 2020, the SONL staff worked in conjunction with Special Olympics Canada to draft comprehensive return to programming guidelines to assist local clubs with safely restarting programs, while adhering to public health directives. Several clubs did take advantage of the opportunity, however, some decided to wait for the COVID-19 vaccination rollout. To fill the void of limited in-person programs, SONL offered a virtual program – the Fall Fit 5 Challenge. We were very pleased to have around 400 athletes and coaches participate. The five-week challenge had athletes joining teams and competing against each other, earning points for performing physical activity and obtaining healthy living goals. It was great to see the athletes staying active and connected with their coaches and fellow athletes. New friendships were formed, and new volunteers joined the fun.

The Fit 5 challenge was followed by the Step into Spring Challenge. It was an action packed eight-week virtual challenge where 350 Special Olympics members throughout Newfoundland and Labrador came together virtually to train and showcase how they were working hard to Be Active, Be Prepared, Stay Healthy, and Stay Connected.

2020-2021 was a year of staff changes; we said goodbye to our Program Director Mike Daly who moved with his family out of the province, Kim McDonald-Wilkes was promoted to the Program Director position, and Hannah Curran joined the staff as the Sport Coordinator, joining Membership Services Coordinator Jennifer McCann and Executive Director Trish Williams. We are confident that we have a strong team to guide SONL out of the pandemic and create opportunities for our athletes as we work towards the new normal for our programs.

The COVID-19 pandemic created financial challenges for SONL due to cancellations like the 2021 Special Olympics Festival and the 2021 Law Enforcement Torch Run. The SONL Board and the Law Enforcement Torch Run have worked hard to create new fundraising initiatives, such as the Piatto Pandemic Pizza Party, the Wedgwood Café Moose Take and Bake, and 50/50 draws to ensure the financial stability of SONL.

SONL is now working on safely returning to in-person programs, but it will take time and will happen slowly. We are working with local clubs to develop new and innovative program delivery and competition models. We are continuing to grow athlete and volunteer participation, reaching a more diverse audience and strengthening quality standards in all aspects of program delivery. We look forward to growing Special Olympics in Newfoundland & Labrador, as we continue to be part of a global movement of people creating a world of inclusion and community, where every single person is accepted and welcomed, regardless of ability or disability.



# PROVINCIAL AWARD WINNERS

## COVID-19 AWARDS Winners

- Courageous - **Cameron Bennett**
- Outstanding - **Matthew McCarthy**
- Venturesome - **Samantha Walsh**
- Impactful - **Heather Miller**
- Determined - **Valerie Mercer**
- 1 - One for All, All for One - **Daphne White**
- 9 - The Whole Nine Yards - **Shirley Miller**

**Congratulations to all the Winners!**

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## COVID-19 AWARDS Criteria

**Courageous** – an athlete who has shown how they have been courageous throughout the past year (maybe facing fears, adapting to new covid rules)

**Outstanding** – an athlete who has stood out for their efforts to improve over the past year (workouts, creating healthy habits, choosing a healthier lifestyle)

**Venturesome** – an athlete who has shown a willingness to embrace a new way of doing things

**Impactful** – an athlete who has been instrumental in keeping a sense of Special Olympics community going within their club

**Determined** – an athlete who has shown great determination throughout the past year

**1 “One for All, All for One”**– a volunteer who has led the way for others to join or follow throughout the past year

**9 “The whole NINE yards”**– a volunteer who has stood out as keeping a sense of Special Olympics Community alive and thriving in their club.

The 2020-2021 year was a very different year for Special Olympics Newfoundland & Labrador due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our Regional Leadership Council reflected on the realities of the year throughout the province and decided that a “different type of year deserves a different type of award” and so, for this year only, the COVID-19 awards were created.

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Newfoundland  
& Labrador



# PROVINCIAL AWARD WINNERS

## Congratulations to all of the Winners!



**Cameron Bennett**  
Bay St. George Bravehearts



**Heather Miller**  
Conception Bay South Brightstars



**Matthew McCarthy**  
Conception Bay South Brightstars



**Valerie Mercer**  
Conception Bay South Brightstars



**Samantha Walsh**  
Bay St. George Bravehearts



**Daphne White**  
Conception Bay South Brightstars



**Shirley Miller**  
Conception Bay South Brightstars

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# NEWS & EVENTS

## Coach Development

Special Olympics Newfoundland and Labrador believes it is important to educate coaches. The National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) offers a variety of coaching courses for Special Olympics. These courses range from in-person sessions on how to plan and implement programs for athletes to online courses aimed at increasing knowledge on specific types of disabilities coaches interact with while volunteering with Special Olympics NL.

SONL completed several Competition Coaching courses prior to COVID halting in-person training. In the first couple of months of COVID-induced restrictions SONL used social media platforms to reach and engage coaches. NCCP online courses were recommended to coaches along with a chance to win a gift card for completing courses.

To help keep the SONL community connected, SONL equipped coaches to utilize online platforms, such as ZOOM.

## Young Athletes

**FUNDamentals** and **Active Start** are programs that introduce young athletes and their families not only to Special Olympics but also to the key components of living a healthy, active lifestyle and basic motor skills. These programs were built on the rationale that when children with an intellectual disability receive early instruction in basic motor skills and developmentally appropriate play, it can lead to improvement in their physical, social and cognitive skills.

## S.O. Give it a GO!

**S.O. Give it a GO** are “try-it” days for potential and returning Special Olympics athletes, giving them the opportunity to try new or different sport activities.

## Competitions

Special Olympics Newfoundland & Labrador has 14 community-based clubs that offer a variety of sports programs, including athletics, bocce, bowling, cross country skiing, curling, floor hockey, golf, powerlifting, rhythmic gymnastics, softball, snowshoeing, soccer and swimming. Each club works diligently to ensure that athletes have opportunities to showcase and improve their skills in their chosen sport(s).

## Unified Sport

Team sports often bring people together. Special Olympics Unified Sports teams do that and so much more.

Special Olympics Unified Sports is an inclusive program that combines Special Olympics Athletes (individuals with an intellectual disability) and partners (individuals without an intellectual disability) on teams for training and competition.

Unified Sports promotes social inclusion and development through shared sport training and competitive experiences. All athletes and partners are recognized as equal contributors which creates a sense of belonging and enables all participants to form mutually beneficial relationships that span well beyond the playing field.



# ATHLETE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

## Athlete Leadership Programs (ALPs)

**What is ALPS?** Through organized training and practical experiences, Athlete Leadership Programs prepare athletes to undertake meaningful positions of influence and leadership throughout the Special Olympics organization, both on and off the playing field.



SONL is so proud that Heather Miller is Special Olympics Canada Athlete Representative on SOC's Board of Directors. Leadership is not new to Heather; she sits on SONL's Board of Directors, is the Chair of the Canadian Athlete Leadership Council, writes a newsletter - The Athlete Post and delivers speeches to sponsors and partners, working tirelessly to promote Special Olympics

## Athlete Leadership in Review by Heather Miller

Athlete Leadership still challenges me in my role as Chair of the Canadian Athlete Leadership Council (CALC). It was very rewarding to me personally to complete an Onboarding Manual for new members appointed to the CALC.

Athlete Leadership is growing in Newfoundland and Labrador, even though COVID has affected the way we do things. Our Athletes are showing that they can take on Leadership roles in their clubs.

Athlete Leadership allows Athletes to "shine" outside sports. During the SONL challenges they created fitness workouts, to use in programming. Art, drawing, and craft sessions were hosted on zoom by Athletes for other Athletes. We saw athletes voicing their opinions on Social Chats and our athletes were becoming more confident, independent, and more willing to take on more Leadership roles.

Over the last year many athletes completed Athlete Leadership courses that were offered during the challenges, the training that they completed is preparing them to become Athlete leaders in their communities.

Andrew Hynes, our Athlete Health Messenger, has been spreading the word about getting healthy and staying active. Andrew was selected to go to Russia next year for the world games as part of the torch run team. "Now That's a Leader!"

Athlete Leadership has opened many new and exciting opportunities for me. I have been asked by a researcher at the University of Toronto to write a note for a booklet to talk about why wellness programs are important to Athletes.

**Athlete Leadership is my "niche". I Love it.**

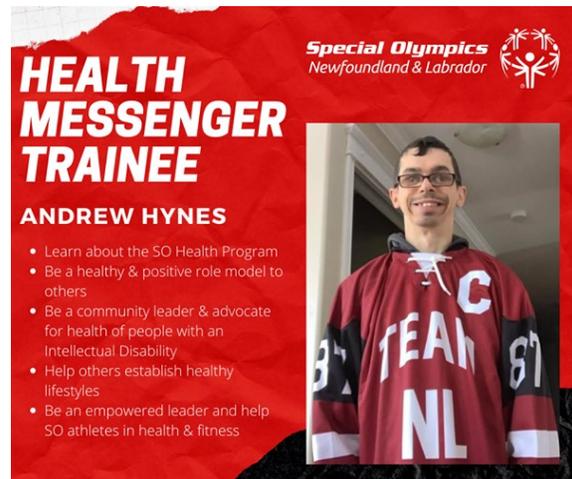
Heather Miller

# ATHLETE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

## Health Messenger

SONL athlete Andrew Hynes has completed the Special Olympics Health Messenger Training and is committed to promoting healthy lifestyles and advocate for the health of people with intellectual disabilities.

Andrew was trained in August 2020 and has already had several engagements, such as filming for SONL, speaking with sponsors, and engaging the community about the benefits of Special Olympics and how it has helped him lead a healthy lifestyle.



**Special Olympics**  
Newfoundland & Labrador

## HEALTH MESSENGER TRAINEE

**ANDREW HYNES**

- Learn about the SO Health Program
- Be a healthy & positive role model to others
- Be a community leader & advocate for health of people with an Intellectual Disability
- Help others establish healthy lifestyles
- Be an empowered leader and help SO athletes in health & fitness



## Canada's Sports Hall of Fame & Order of Newfoundland



This September, Jackie Barrett was inducted into the class of 2020/21 inductees for [Canada's Sports Hall of Fame](#) and invested into the [Order of Newfoundland](#). In addition to these most recent accomplishments, Jackie Barrett was named Special Olympics Canada's Male Athlete of the Year in 2000 and 2015. In 2015, he also received the prestigious Dr. Frank Hayden Athlete Lifetime Achievement Award from Special Olympics Canada and became the first Special Olympics athlete to be nominated for the Lou Marsh Award as Canada's Top athlete.

After retiring from competition, Jackie has found several new roles in the Special Olympics organization; Jackie is a peer mentor for other powerlifters as well as a Public Speaker and Ambassador through the Special Olympics Canada Athlete Leadership Program.

Jackie was also recruited to work with a committee to develop the National Coaching Certification Program's Powerlifting technical manual, which is now used across Canada. A tremendously accomplished athlete, Jackie Barrett remains at the forefront of the Special Olympics movement in Canada, shining a new light on what people with intellectual disabilities can accomplish in sport and life.

## Virtual ALPs

Due to Covid-19 and the cancellation of in-person programs, SONL pivoted to Virtual Challenges to help athletes stay active and connected. The Virtual Challenges proved to be a great opportunity to have athletes take on leadership roles and host Athlete Leadership Program (ALP) courses.

Athletes were able to complete ALP courses through Zoom, including:

- Social Media 101
- Video/Photography 101
- Dollars & \$ense - a course on Financial Literacy taught virtually by Enactus Grand Falls-Windsor
- Becoming an Athlete Reporter - a course taught virtually by Special Olympics British Columbia

Athletes led virtual workouts and events in the STEP into Spring Challenge. In the “STEP it UP Series” of workouts, some were led by athletes alongside a mentor. For example, SONL Athlete Zach Dean and Coach Shawn Dean led a bocce workout, SONL Athlete Evan Richard and Coach Guy Richard led a cardio workout, and SONL Athlete Christian Conway and Coach Brooklyn Conway led an adapted seated workout. The workouts were all published on SONL’s YouTube Channel so athletes can continue to access these at-home athlete led training resources. Through Zoom, Leah McDonald led an event called “Movers & Shakers” where athletes participated in a fun evening of musical movement and fitness.

In the STEP into Spring Challenge and the Fit Family & Friends Challenge, Athletes Heather Miller & Megan Martin led Guided Art sessions on Zoom. Using their artistic talents they taught other athletes step-by-step how to create drawings and crafts.

For the Fit Family & Friends Challenge, SONL Athletes Jesse Renouf and Brayden Moraze put their Athlete Reporter training to use and interviewed SONL’s Health Messenger, Andrew Hynes. The interview was filmed on Zoom and published on [SONL’s YouTube Channel](#), Facebook Page and LinkedIn. In the interview Andrew discussed his experience in Special Olympics, advice for creating healthy habits, and the importance of being kind to others. The interview not only showcased the leadership of the interviewers and interviewee, but also encouraged other athletes to practice a healthy and kind lifestyle.



## What’s next for ALPs?

We plan to continue building our Athlete Leadership Program and working with athletes to create an organization that upholds SONL’s values of empowerment, excellence, respect, diversity and inclusion.

# PARTNERSHIPS

## SOBEYS SUPPORTS SPECIAL OLYMPICS ATHLETES AMID COVID-19 PANDEMIC WITH NUTRITION EDUCATION - AND \$1M DONATION

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Sobeys Inc. (Sobeys) made the difficult decision to cancel its national checkstand fundraising campaign in support of Special Olympics Canada, scheduled June 18 to July 1, 2020. To ensure that this decision does not negatively impact Special Olympics athletes, Sobeys honoured its fundraising target with a \$1 million donation.

As a Special Olympics Canada partner since 2016, Sobeys has contributed more than \$5.4 million in food and funds. Through this support, we have seen first-hand the difference nutrition education can make in empowering healthy bodies and healthy minds.

Special Olympics Canada thanks Sobeys for the astounding \$1 million donation. These much needed funds will help keep grassroots, community-led programs alive, supporting 49,600 athletes with an intellectual disability and 22,000 coaches and volunteers from coast to coast.

**MUCH LIKE OUR ATHLETES,  
SOBEYS WON'T LET  
OBSTACLES KEEP THEM  
FROM GREAT THINGS.**



Sobeys

Special Olympics  
Olympiques spéciaux  
Canada



# Tim Hortons

Tim Hortons is the Lead National Corporate Sponsor of Active Start and FUNdamentals, providing cash and support through products and TimsTV. This extends Tim Hortons' support of grassroots sports programs for children and youth through its Timbits program. Tim Hortons signed on to be the sponsor of Special Olympics' Day of Inclusion in Canada. On July 21, 2018, Tim Hortons sold a Special Olympics donut designed by an athlete, raising funds and awareness for the movement and 50th Anniversary. The in-restaurant campaign raised more than \$121K for Special Olympics Canada and the Chapters. On July 20, 2019, the second Day of Inclusion ran at Tim Hortons and \$150K was raised. The 2021 Day of Inclusion was postponed due to COVID-19 and is currently scheduled to run in early 2022. Special Olympics Canada will confirm the date with Chapters in writing as soon as it is finalized by Tim Hortons.



Active Start

FUNdamentals

# LETR

The Law Enforcement Torch Run® for Special Olympics is the movement's largest grass-roots fundraiser and public awareness vehicle worldwide. At its most basic level, the Torch Run is an actual running event where officers and athletes run the Flame of Hope™ to the Opening Ceremonies of local, regional, and provincial Special Olympics competitions and to National Games. Today, the Torch Run is more than just a run and encompasses a variety of fundraising initiatives such as T-shirt sales, and special events that have local appeal including Polar Plunges, Cop on Top, and Battle of the Badges.

All funds raised through the Newfoundland & Labrador Law Enforcement Torch Run events are directed into program supports that directly affect all community Special Olympic NL programs. Funds help pay for various expenses including: games travel, accommodations, meals, grants for new community programs, volunteer and athlete training, administration, and information/promotional materials. These funds help Special Olympic programs remain active and effective in many communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.



# IN MEMORY

Special Olympics Newfoundland and Labrador would like to remember the following members that have passed away this year.



## **Don Kearley - Gander Wings**

On May 7, 2021, Gander Wings Athletes, Coaches and Volunteers lost one of their dearest friends and companions, athlete Donald Kearley. Don was a member of Gander Wings for the past eight years. He certainly enjoyed Wednesday nights when he came to bowling.....strikes, spares, gutter-balls and the high-fives....he enjoyed it all. Maybe more than bowling, however, he thoroughly enjoyed the parties and dances.

His ever-present ear-to-ear smile was evidence of the enjoyment he felt when he was among his friends. Don will be missed by all his Gander Wings' friends but mostly by his brother and fellow Gander Wings' athlete, Hubert.

## **Diane Mildred Noble - Baie Verte Strikers**

Our hearts were broken on Sunday, June 27, 2021 when we heard of Diane's passing. Diane slipped away peacefully at the Central Newfoundland Regional Hospital, Grand Falls-Windsor, NL at the age of 57 years.

Diane became a member of the Baie Verte Peninsula Special Olympics group in 2009. At the time the group was involved with the five-pin bowling and later became involved in bocce. Diane loved to travel with the Special Olympics group to different towns, where she would meet new and old friends.

Diane's best memory of Special Olympics was when she travelled to St. John's to take part in the first bocce tournament. There were no expectations of ever winning a medal as this was a new sport for the Baie Verte Peninsula group. Diane was so excited when her team won the gold medal! She was gleaming!

Diane also loved to attend the Max Simms Camp. Everyone she met became an instant friend. Diane will always be remembered for her constant smile and her eagerness to help at anything that was asked of her.



# IN MEMORY



## **Michelle Rye-Gardner - Exploits Hurricanes**

We are deeply saddened to pass along the news that a long-time member and friend, Michelle Rye-Gardner, of the Exploits Hurricanes Special Olympics Club, has passed away.

Michelle was a go-getter; afraid of nothing and always a positive person. She will be forever remembered as an avid volunteer and supporter of the Exploits Hurricanes Special Olympics Club, along with any other Club/person associated with Special Olympics near and far. Michelle has contributed many years and many hours of her time to the Exploits club, from being the Club's taxi to coaching swimming and Gym Night, and the list goes on. Michelle's biggest role being Club Coordinator - this role in itself takes so much time and dedication to which Michelle surely fit. The athletes of Exploits Hurricanes Special Olympics were her number one priority.

She was known as the Club Photographer, as she would always say that the athletes needed to have pictures for their memories. She took so much pride in being able to provide pictures and was so excited to share them. Michelle was the most selfless person anyone could meet.

In 2020, Michelle and her husband traveled to Thunder Bay, as a spectator to watch and support the Exploits Hurricanes Curling Team win their Gold Medal. Again, taking along her camera for pictures to share when everyone returned home. She will be forever missed. Ever loved, ever remembered.

## **Joey Lahey, Placentia Lions**

On April 26, 2021, Placentia Lions lost one of their athletes, Joseph (Joey) Lahey. Joey was a hard-working athlete that enjoyed spending time with his friends - especially those he made at Special Olympics programs. He was a great member of the club.

Joey loved technology and was always happy to help when there were problems connecting the Bluetooth, or with getting an app to work properly. In the spirit of the Special Olympics oath, Joey was certainly brave in all he attempted.

Joey will be missed by his family and friends, and especially by his fellow athletes, coaches, and volunteers at the Placentia Lions club.



# PROVINCIAL SPONSORS



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Trish Williams  
Executive Director

### **Staff**

**Trish Williams, Executive Director**  
**Kim McDonald-Wilkes, Program Director**  
**Hannah Curran, Program Coordinator**  
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