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For immediate release

Media release

Sports personality lends a hand to Special Olympics awareness

Special Olympics New Zealand has kicked off its first ever Awareness Week, with the support of well-known sportsman Beauden Barrett.

Special Olympics New Zealand provides a year-round programme of sports training and competition for more than 7,000 children and adults with intellectual disabilities in New Zealand. Athletes take part in training programmes at their local Clubs and have the opportunity to compete regionally, nationally and even internationally.

Beauden Barrett is assisting the organisation with publicity to help raise funds for its important work.

“Everyone should have an opportunity to play sport, no matter what their ability level. Special Olympics is a great cause creating opportunities for children and adults with intellectual disabilities to participate in regular sport, and I’m pleased to be involved in helping out” Barrett says.

“They are really hard working, have a great volunteer network and pay their own way to play their sport so I’m encouraging people to get behind them so they can do more”, he added

As well as its sports training and competition focus Special Olympics New Zealand also provides intellectually disabled athletes with important opportunities to meet and socialise with other athletes – opportunities which can be rare for people with intellectual disabilities.

The organisation also offers athletes leadership development through its Athlete Leadership Programme, health screening via Healthy Athletes[®], and encourages social inclusion through Unified Sports[®], where intellectually disabled athletes are combined in teams with unified partners (without intellectual disabilities).

“We’re about so much more than sport, and that’s the message we’re wanting to communicate during this Awareness Week,” says Kathy Gibson, Chief Executive of Special Olympics New Zealand.

“While sport is our main focus, the benefits of participating in Special Olympics are much greater than physical fitness.

“Through participating in sport, athletes with intellectual disabilities make friends, gain confidence, and they get to be part of a team. As athletes develop physically and emotionally, they learn that they can achieve not only on the sports field, but also out in the community.

“I’d like to encourage New Zealanders to give generously during this Special Olympics New Zealand Awareness Week, to help us to continue to offer these opportunities to more New Zealanders with intellectual disabilities.”

Special Olympics New Zealand

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Created by the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation. Authorised and accredited by Special Olympics, Inc for the benefit of persons with intellectual disabilities.

Special Olympics New Zealand's Awareness Week runs from 5-12 July 2015. Text GIVE to 2449 to donate \$3 to Special Olympics New Zealand or visit www.specialolympics.org.nz

Special Olympics New Zealand facts:

- More than 7000 children and adults with intellectual disabilities take part in Special Olympics in New Zealand.
- These athletes are supported by over 3000 volunteers.
- The organisation offers 13 different Olympic-type summer and winter sports throughout New Zealand, through 44 Special Olympics Clubs.
- Each year, Special Olympics New Zealand holds over 200 events throughout the country.

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About Special Olympics New Zealand

Special Olympics New Zealand is a year-round programme of sports training and competition for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. More than 7000 athletes throughout the country train and compete in 13 different Olympic-type summer and winter sports.

Special Olympics New Zealand also offers athletes leadership development through its Athlete Leadership Programme, health screening via Healthy Athletes[®], and encourages social inclusion through Unified Sports[®], where intellectually disabled athletes are combined in teams with unified partners (without intellectual disabilities).

Founded in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Special Olympics provides athletes continuing opportunities to develop fitness, demonstrate courage and experience joy as they participate in the sharing of gifts and friendship with other athletes, their families and the community.

[Words Matter—Special Olympics Language Guidelines for media](#)

Special Olympics New Zealand: www.specialolympics.org.nz