



Thursday 13 October 2016

For immediate release

## Media release

# Global Messengers graduate!

Congratulations to our 2016 Global Messengers, who graduated from the Special Olympics New Zealand Global Messenger Programme at an event in Parliament on Thursday 13 October.

It was a star-studded affair hosted by Special Olympics Chair, and MP for Rangitikei Ian McKelvie, and attended by Minister for Disability Issues and guest speaker Hon. Nicky Wagner, along with a number of our graduates' local MPs there to celebrate the occasion.

The graduation was not only a chance to recognise the eight Global Messengers' achievements throughout the year-long leadership programme, it also provided an opportunity to put some of their new found skills to practice. All of our graduates played a key role in the running of the event, such as meeting and greeting guests, delivering speeches as part of the ceremony, or networking with guests afterwards. Speeches were delivered by James Farrell (Special Olympics Hawkes Bay), Lisa Donald (Special Olympics Nelson), and James Bott (Special Olympics North Harbour).

The group undertook a year of training, attending four workshops teaching them public speaking, media liaison, presentation skills, speech writing, goal setting, and leadership. They were supported during their training by a mentor to make the most of their experience.

"Our national Athlete Leadership Programme is one of our most important initiatives in my view. Giving our athletes their own voice is vital. To see the confidence and skills our athlete leaders develop as they progress through the training is truly inspirational and I am delighted to celebrate their graduation as ambassadors for our organisation," says Kathy Gibson, Chief Executive Officer of Special Olympics New Zealand.

To date 62 athletes from around New Zealand have graduated as Global Messengers and have gone on to represent Special Olympics around the country and abroad since the programme launched in 2010.

"Our Class of 2016 have really embraced the opportunity this training has given them," said Julia Sanson, Athlete Leadership Programme Manager for Special Olympics New Zealand.

"They have worked hard throughout the year, and I have seen them all grow in confidence and ability as a result. I was very proud how they put into practice many of the elements of their training during the graduation ceremony. Hon. Nicky Wagner commented on how well they all introduced themselves to her and networked!"

Now that the group of Global Messengers has completed the formal training programme, their role is to work with their local Clubs and Special Olympics New Zealand to help raise awareness of Special Olympics in their communities and around the country.

### Special Olympics New Zealand

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“The support they have received from their mentors has been invaluable and I hope their relationship continues as our new athlete ambassadors head out into their communities to raise awareness of Special Olympics. I am looking forward to hearing about their future achievements!” Julia said.

Class of 2016:

Global Messenger	Special Olympics Club
Daniel Casbolt	North Harbour
James Bott	North Harbour
Lisa Donald	Nelson
Mohit Chand	Papakura
James Farrell	Hawkes Bay
Rochelle Waters	Canterbury
Michael Banner	Kapiti
Alex Johnsen	Waikato

For more information and images:

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### About Special Olympics New Zealand

Special Olympics New Zealand offers year-round sports training and competition for people with intellectual disabilities in the community, and at secondary school. More than 7000 athletes train with the organisation in 13 Olympic-style sports and compete locally, nationally, and internationally.

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](http://www.specialolympics.org.nz)