



26 April 2018

For immediate release

Media release: New CEO for Special Olympics New Zealand

Newly appointed Special Olympics New Zealand CEO Carolyn Young has paid tribute to her predecessor Kathy Gibson.

“Kathy will be a hard act to follow but I’m looking forward to carrying on her amazing work, focusing on giving people with intellectual disabilities opportunities not only to participate in sport, but to take part in our communities as equals,” says Ms Young, who is currently CEO of Netball Central Zone.

Outgoing CEO Mrs Gibson says she is immensely proud to have led an incredible organisation that celebrates the achievements of children and adults with intellectual disabilities, for nearly ten years.

“The whole ethos of Special Olympics gets under your skin and my rewards have come from seeing our athletes achieving their personal bests and being empowered to take their rightful place in our communities across New Zealand with their heads held very high.”

Mrs Gibson joined Special Olympics New Zealand in late 2008, and has provided new direction, improved investment and a focus on strategic growth. She was able to quickly put the systems and processes in place and raise the \$1.4 million required to deliver a successful National Summer Games event in 2009, and delivered two further National Summer Games events in 2013 and 2017.

During her tenure she has grown the organisation from a membership of 4,600 athletes to one that now enables around 12,000 athletes with intellectual disabilities throughout New Zealand to participate in sport locally, nationally and internationally. She has also developed policies, procedures and improvements to support high-quality services, and has established a fully funded Athlete Leadership Programme, enabling athletes with intellectual disabilities to take on national and international leadership roles.

Mrs Gibson has given the organisation a strong voice at the international table, representing 28 Special Olympics organisations on the Special Olympics International Board of Directors as the Asia Pacific representative. She also forged successful corporate partnerships for the organisation and has contributed to the wider sector by working with Sport NZ on the review of the New Zealand Disability Strategy and contributed to the development of the national Health Education Programme through her work with US based Golisano Foundation.

“The time feels right to leave Special Olympics and while I am sad that I will lose the day to day engagement with our athletes, I feel extremely satisfied that I have had the privilege to be part of this incredible team. This organisation is much stronger than when I joined, and I find a huge sense of fulfilment in the value I have been able to add. My family and I plan to continue our long-standing volunteer involvement.”

Special Olympics New Zealand

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Special Olympics Chair Ian McKelvie said; “Kathy’s legacy has left a very positive mark through her committed leadership beyond the call of duty, her efforts in revenue generation and in establishing long term investment contracts both nationally and internationally.

“She has special relationship management skills that have been reflected through her open-door policy, being available to our community whenever they wanted access to her knowledge and experience. She comes from a family committed to community service and Kathy can be very proud with what she has achieved.

“Kathy has been hard to replace but we are very excited to welcome Carolyn to the Special Olympics New Zealand family and know that she has the passion and expertise to continue developing the organisation and providing more opportunities for our athletes.”

Mrs Gibson leaves Special Olympics New Zealand in early May to complete some post-graduate study and will continue with her voluntary work in the sports sector and the wider Manawatu community while she considers her next career move. Ms Young will join Special Olympics New Zealand in June.

“At Netball Central Zone I have worked hard to empower women through achievement in sport and believe this has contributed to the increased profile of women in sport in New Zealand. I’m excited to be use that experience to further empower our Special Olympics athletes,” Ms Young says.



*Kathy Gibson,
Special Olympics New Zealand*



Carolyn Young

ENDS

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Editor's notes:

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.

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

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