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For immediate release

Media release

Hearing tests for athletes with intellectual disabilities on the West Coast

People with intellectual disabilities on the West Coast will receive free hearing tests and ear examinations at next week's Special Olympics West Coast schools programme swim meet, as part of Special Olympics New Zealand's Healthy Athletes® initiative.

The swim event at the Grey District Aquatic Centre in Greymouth on 4 March is expected to attract around 30 secondary school students from the West Coast area with intellectual disabilities, all of whom will receive free screenings conducted by a team of clinical professionals and audiology students. Service providers from the local community have also been invited to bring people along for the screening.

"International studies show that people with intellectual disabilities have poorer health outcomes than the general population," says Dr Jeanine Doherty, Health Representative on the Board for Special Olympics New Zealand.

"Here in New Zealand, data from Healthy Athletes® shows that on average 50 percent of the people we screen will have wax blockages and 32 percent will have some hearing loss of significance. The screenings allow us to identify possible hearing problems and refer these people on for further evaluation and treatment, ultimately improving their health."

Regional Sports Coordinator for Special Olympics New Zealand, Graeme Bain, says it's exciting to have the hearing screenings available at the West Coast schools programme's inaugural event next week. The programme is the first opportunity for secondary school students with an intellectual disability to get involved in Special Olympics on the West Coast.

"Special Olympics offers invaluable opportunities to get involved in sport, make new friends, build confidence, and develop leadership skills," Graeme says. "The Healthy Athletes® screening is another great benefit Special Olympics can offer to people with an intellectual disability here on the West Coast."

The Healthy Athletes® screening will take place at the Grey District Aquatic Centre in Greymouth from 11am – 1pm on Wednesday 4 March. The schools programme event kicks off at 10am.

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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.

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.

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

About Healthy Athletes®

The aim of Special Olympics New Zealand's Healthy Athletes® initiative is to improve the health awareness of its athletes through health promotion. The initiative offers screening in the areas of: vision and eye health (Opening Eyes®); hearing and ear health (Healthy Hearing); dental and oral health (Special Smiles®); and podiatry and foot health (Fit Feet).

The screenings are professionally run by volunteer health professionals and are open to all people with intellectual disabilities.

[Special Olympics New Zealand's Health Promotion Screenings.](#)