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SAMUEL CENTRE  
FOR SOCIAL  
CONNECTEDNESS

**Special  
Olympics**





## The Issue:

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Special Olympics athletes missed out on some of the positive experiences that accompany in-person events. Our goal was to create a remote & asynchronous event that captured the three parts of in-person competition that we identified as important, yet lacking due to the necessary COVID-19 restrictions:



The motivation to exercise that comes from working toward a tangible health goal



The social connectedness that is built by cheering for one another



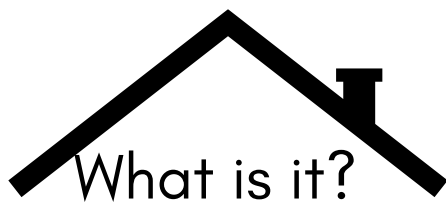
The pride and self-esteem that comes from finally being able to show off your hard work



To make this initiative successful, we partnered with local North American organizations that provide resources to individuals with Intellectual disabilities (ID).

These organizations allowed us to reach many communities and build social connectedness amongst local populations.

To foster social connectedness in the greater community, this event was open to anyone with an ID, not just Special Olympics athletes.



The Athletes at Home Challenge took place in **four parts**:

1

We asked interested athletes and their families to learn and play a new lawn game together during July. We created lawn games that could be built with materials at home, so that nobody had to go out to buy materials.

2

Athletes practiced their games between **July 1st -July 25th**. To help foster motivation, we asked athletes and their families to film their first and last turn playing their lawn game.

3

To recreate the pride and self-esteem that accompanies in-person events, we used these clips to create the Athletes at Home Live Showcase. The showcase premiered on **July 31st** and was an opportunity for athletes to show off their new skills to their families and friends. In total, **seven participants** completed the challenge in full and were featured.

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4

To spread awareness of the importance of working out at home with family and friends, Justin and Adri were guests on two episodes of the Special Chronicles podcast:



### EPISODE 441

Special Chronicle's host, Daniel Smrokowski, met with Justin and Adri to introduce their work and the Athletes at Home Challenge.



### EPISODE 442

Justin and Adri took over the podcast to host a panel of participants from the Athletes at Home Challenge. They discussed health, wellbeing, and social connectedness at home.



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On average, the Special Chronicles show reaches **23,000 monthly listeners worldwide**. Using this platform, we extended our impact beyond local communities to foster a form of global connectedness.

Beyond sharing information and resources on the importance of working out at home, we highlighted **athletes' lived experiences**. Participants shared their personal stories about working out at home in an attempt to motivate their fellow athletes.



It is important to note that not all 24 registered athletes and their families completed the challenge. Due to time constraint and internet accessibility, some families found it hard to continue. If future events chose to take on an online format, these areas should receive additional support as is needed.

While only seven athletes completed the full process, these individuals rediscovered the lost qualities of in-person events that we aimed to restore. As we were researching the health, wellbeing, and social connectedness of athletes and their families during the COVID-19 pandemic this was a major success. We were able to make a positive impact on athlete's health while they were isolated at home. Moreover, we were able to bring athletes and their families closer together during this time.

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"[my daughter" has re-established some of her skills .... I'm really proud of her and she's proud of herself" - athlete's parent

"This was a lot of fun and very meaningful to us ... thank you for inspiring us" - athlete's parent

"I enjoyed working out with my friends and family at home ... I can't wait to see what comes next" - athlete