



## **SPECIAL OLYMPICS MONTANA THREE-YEAR PILOT PROJECT ON THE FLATHEAD RESERVATION**

Our **FLATHEAD RESERVATION PILOT PROJECT** is a collaborative effort to improve health for intellectually disabled Montanans on the Flathead Reservation. Over a three year period, we plan to: support development of five Special Olympics athletic training and competition teams (for ages 8 to 98); offer free MedFest healthcare screenings on the Reservation; and introduce Project UNIFY®, designed to increase social inclusion of those with intellectual disability, in 10 schools. Our youngest participants will be in Head Start programs, and we hope to involve many Salish Kootenai College students—particularly those studying for careers in education and the biomedical sciences—as athletic coaches as well as Project UNIFY® and MedFest volunteers.

One of our state's most vulnerable populations is reservation-based Native Americans with intellectual disability. Health needs of many Native Americans are acute. Montana's 2014 *State of the State Medical Report* underscored that non-Indian men in Montana live 19 years longer than Indian men, whose life expectancy is just 56 years, and non-Indian women live 20 years longer than Indian women, whose life expectancy is 62 years. One specific health challenge for many people with intellectual disability is obesity; this is especially pronounced among Native Americans.

Our **GOALS** through this pilot project are to improve three key components of health for Flathead Reservation-based Montanans with intellectual disability:

- *Physical fitness*, through **Special Olympics sports training and competition opportunities**, including Native games, Reservation-based teams, and regional, state, national, and international competition opportunities;
- *Health assessment*, through free **MedFest** health care screenings; and
- *Social inclusion* in school, addressed through **Project UNIFY®**.

We will **ACHIEVE THESE GOALS** by:

- Registering and fully involving a minimum of 140 Flathead Reservation-based athletes (individuals with intellectual and severe developmental disabilities age 8+) in Special Olympics athletic team sports training and competition activities;
- Offering MedFest free health care screenings and two additional athlete recruitment/sports physical events on the Reservation each year (with fun, interactive sports demonstrations, dinner for the whole family, and prizes); and
- Implementing Project UNIFY® in 10 schools on the Flathead Reservation, impacting more than 3,200 students.

Special Olympics Montana anticipates the following **OUTCOMES**:

- New understanding of the different ways in which Special Olympics Montana can offer and receive joy and inspiration through inclusion of intellectually disabled Native Americans and their loved ones in our welcoming, empowering community;
- Establishment of lasting friendships that build stronger, wider, easier-to-travel bridges between reservation and non-reservation communities;
- Increased social acceptance of those with intellectual disability, developed through Project UNIFY® (already, in Project UNIFY® schools across the state, we have more students *without* intellectual disability showing up to participate in “Unified Sports” opportunities than those *with* intellectual disability);
- Improved physical health of Special Olympics athletes, as measured by data collected at annual MedFest free health screenings and at recruitment events;
- Development of athletes’ interpersonal skills, critical for success as employees (In the US, 44% of Special Olympics athletes are employed, compared to 28% of people with intellectual disabilities who have never participated in Special Olympics.); and
- Establishment of partnerships with: the Montana Department of Public Health & Human Services (DPHHS will collaborate on MedFest events by providing data collection, analysis and technical support, primarily through the Montana Disability and Health Program and the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System); the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Department of Health, which will work with DPPHS to inform public policy decision-makers of lessons learned through this project; and with our pilot project Advisory Council, made up of Indian Country leaders from across the state, among others.

**POST-GRANT SUSTAINABILITY:** Our budget includes \$11,250 per year for fundraising training for Flathead Reservation law enforcement officers. These officers will attend the Law Enforcement Torch Run Kick-Off Conference and other events to learn how to raise funds for Special Olympics teams through polar plunges and Tip-A-Cop events, etc. Across the state, law enforcement officers collectively raise over \$600,000 per year for Special Olympics teams. Additionally, Flathead teams will be able to raise the bulk of necessary travel and equipment funds through our annual Chevy Truck Raffle, which also yields about \$600,000 a year for Special Olympics teams statewide.

