



Advocating for Respect & Inclusion

The Impact of 'Spread the Word'

so i did.



**Special
Olympics**
Illinois

Pete Beale-DelVecchio

President & CEO, Special Olympics Illinois

Welcome & Introduction

- Overview of today's session
- Focus on respect, inclusion, and advocacy
- Featuring voices from leadership and athletes



**Special
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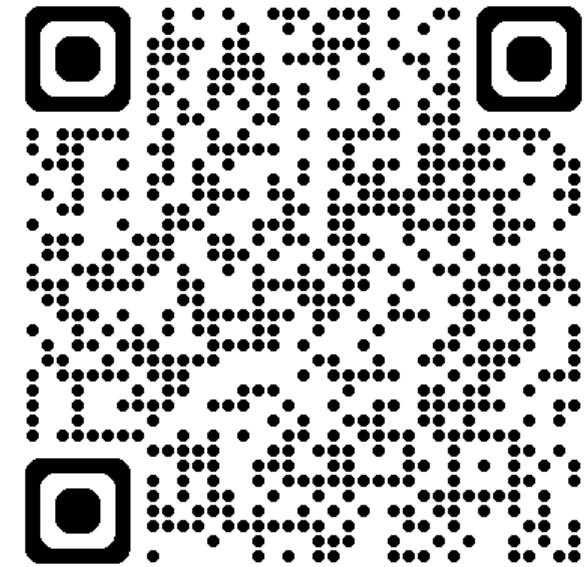
Jacksonville Area Center for Independent Living (JACIL) Program Director/ Manager

Autism/Type-2 Diabetes/Marfan Syndrome Self-Advocate

Disability/Disability Rights Activist/ Advocate.

Why Language Matters

- Words have power to hurt or to heal
- The R-word demeans, dehumanizes, perpetuates stigma and exclusion
- Inclusive language fosters dignity and respect



What is 'Spread the Word'?

- Global campaign by Special Olympics
- Started to challenge the use of the R-word
 - Kantar Group study:
 - Of 50 million posts
 - More than 2/3rds of those referring to people with ID were negative
 - 29 millions posts with slurs, many using the r-word
 - On social media, 7 out of 10 posts referring to people with ID are negative
- Expanded to promote respect and inclusion for all
 - In 2010, President Obama signed “Rosa’s Law”
 - Changed all occurrences of “mental retardation” in US laws → “intellectual disability”

Promoting Inclusion

- It is about stopping use of the r-word
- **AND**
- It is about promoting inclusion!

What is “inclusion”?...

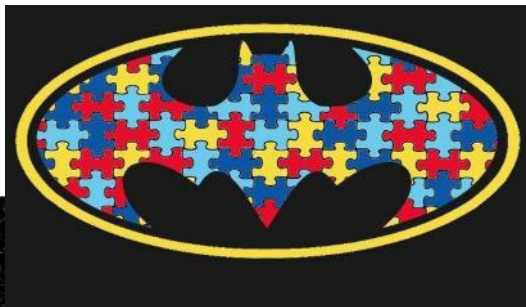
- Inclusion means: “Everybody has a seat at the table, and that they belong at the table!”
- Your voice is heard and it is heard loudly and respectfully! (Regardless of how you communicate!)
- Inclusion= Representation & Respect
- My opinions matter!
- “Nothing About Us Without US!”



What does “inclusion” mean to me...

- Inclusion means advocating for my appropriate accommodations and my rights!
- Inclusion means taking control of my health!
- Inclusion means being apart of my community and being a contributing member of society!
- Inclusion means living independently, working independently, and advocating independently!
- Inclusion means making my own decisions!

INCLUSION MEANS BEING THE BEST VERSION OF ME THAT I
INDEPENDENTLY CAN LIVE!



“See me! Hear me! Respect me!...”

- See me for who I am, for how I choose to represent myself! Don't project your own image of me onto me!
- Hear what I am really saying! Listen to understand me! Ask me for clarification if you don't understand what I am saying!
- Respect me as a person, as a human, and as a contributing member of my community and society!

LET ME DEFINE WHO I AM!

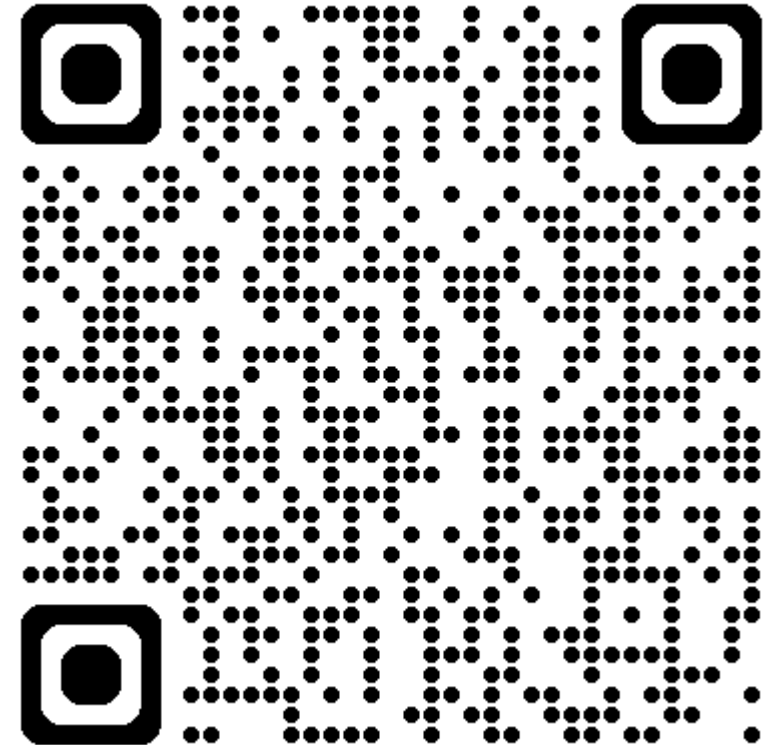


Impact of the Campaign

- Millions of pledges made worldwide
- Schools, businesses, and communities engaged
- Increased awareness and policy changes

Why This Matters – Personal Stories

- Hear from Special Olympics athletes
- Athlete shares personal experience with inclusion
- The real-life impact of advocacy and awareness



How has Special Olympics Illinois helped me be included

- Special Olympics has allowed me to participate in athletics when I otherwise would not be able to due to my physical disabilities.
- Special Olympics has provided me with the platform as an athlete leader to speak about inclusion.
- Special Olympics Health Messenger Program has given me the tools to take control of my health.
- Special Olympics has inspired me to dream and to never give up on my dreams!

#ChooseToInclude

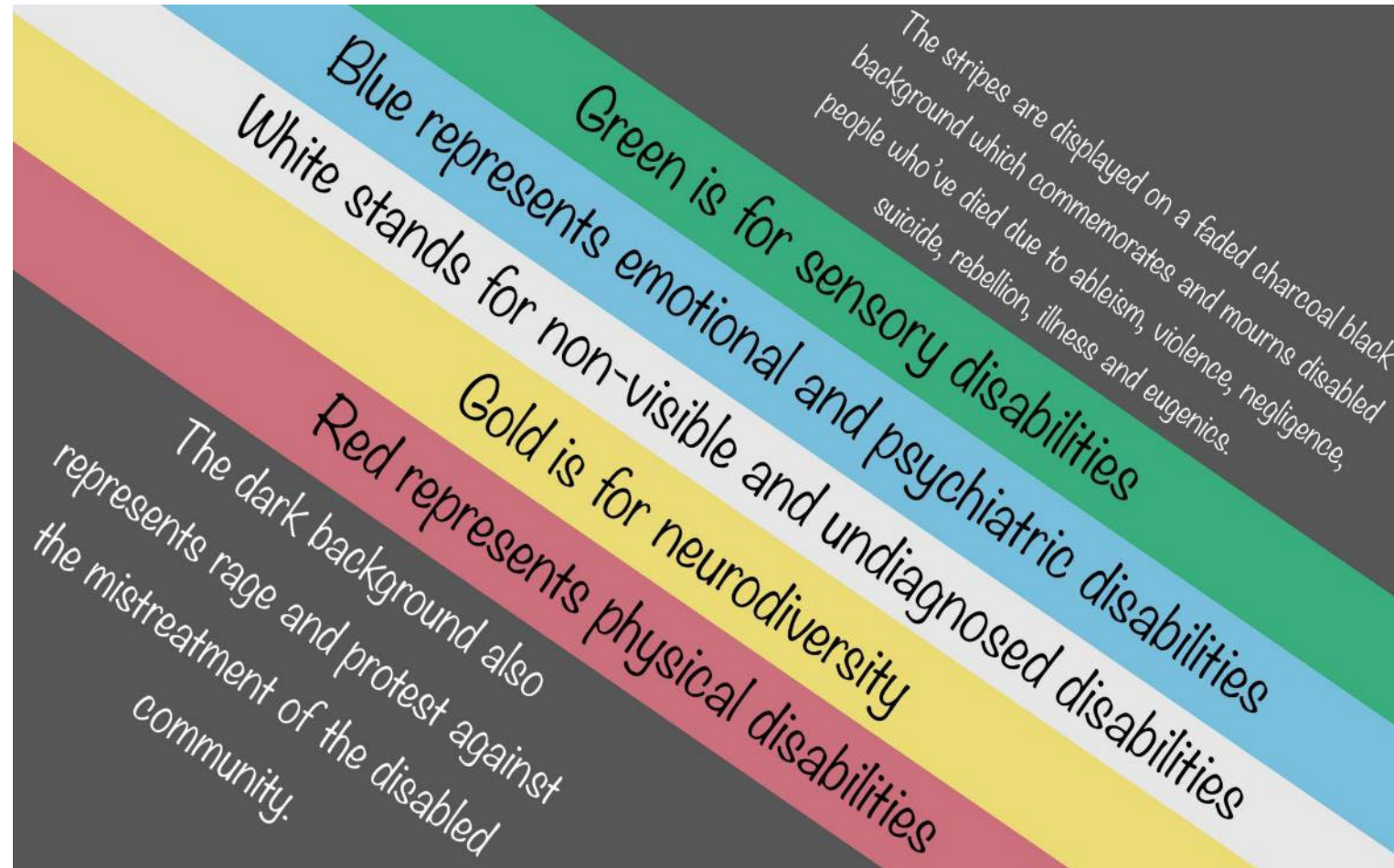


Independent Living Philosophy...

- "Independent Living does not mean that we want to do everything by ourselves, do not need anybody or like to live in isolation. Independent Living means that we demand the same choices and control in our every-day lives that our non-disabled brothers and sisters, neighbors and friends take for granted. We want to grow up in our families, go to the neighborhood school, use the same bus as our neighbors, work in jobs that are in line with our education and interests, and raise families of our own. We are profoundly ordinary people sharing the same need to feel included, recognized and loved."



Disability Pride!



Call to Action

- Join the movement for respect and inclusion
- Visit spreadtheword.global to learn more
- Be an advocate every day—in words and deeds

How You Can Help Spread The Word

- **Promote inclusive language and actions**
 - Use “intellectual disability,” which replaced “mental retardation” in U.S. federal law in 2010. Refer to individuals, persons, or people with intellectual disabilities, rather than “intellectually disabled people” or “the intellectually disabled.”
 - Do not use the terms “retardation,” “retarded,” “retard,” etc. These R-words have become hurtful slurs toward people with intellectual disabilities. Using the R-word is the same as using any slur against a minority group.
 - If you are uncertain what terminology to use, try asking a person with a disability! Inclusion is about recognizing the humanity that connects all of us. Starting a conversation is the first step.
 - Be courteous and show kindness to all!

Ways to Spread the Word

- Educate others in your community
 - Invite family members to your events (plays, recitals, sports, etc.)
 - Ask people not to use the r-word
- Be a teammate.
- Be a friend.
- Welcome someone who has been left out.
- Sit next to someone alone at lunch.
- Say hello to someone in the hallway.
- Other ideas?
- **Make Your Pledge for Inclusion**



Taylor's Contact Information

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Connect with Special Olympics Illinois

- Website: SOILL.org
- Social Media:
 - Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok:
[@specialolympicsillinois](#)
 - X: [@so_Illinoi](#)
- Email: info@soill.org

Questions

- Thank you for joining us!
- Questions or comments?
- Let's continue the conversation on inclusion



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THANK YOU