APTA and Special Olympics Build On Long-Standing Relationship with New Partnership

ALEXANDRIA, VA, August 7, 2017 — The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) has partnered with Special Olympics International, Inc. (SOI), under the new APTA Partnerships program, which seeks to enhance relationships and develop mutually beneficial partnerships with other organizations that share common goals. The program allows APTA to extend its reach in advancing the profession of physical therapy.

APTA and SOI have been long-time partners, working to advance the health and fitness of Special Olympics athletes. The partnership became more formal with APTA becoming a core collaborator in SOI’s Healthy Athletes program, and a founding partner of their FUNfitness screening in 1999. Since the launch of this program, physical therapists (PTs) and physical therapist students have provided SOI athletes with fitness screenings, education, and consultation about fitness improvement.

This new partnership agreement is intended to build on the long-standing relationship that already exists between the two organizations and expand on the work they have done together. It will expand APTA’s participation and leadership in SOI’s health initiatives and increase exposure for APTA, its members, and the profession, spotlighting the important role PTs play in keeping athletes fit and able to compete. The two organizations may work together on joint advocacy initiatives that advance the health status and access to qualified health professionals for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. APTA and SOI may also seek out opportunities for collaborative research.

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"I could not be more thrilled by this newly formalized agreement with Special Olympics," said APTA President Sharon L. Dunn, PT, PhD. "APTA is committed to promoting health and wellness for all and to that end has worked for years with Special Olympics to reach, embrace, and assist the gifted athletes they represent. This new partnership will provide further structure and lay out some clear goals for us to achieve together. We have some exciting opportunities ahead to collaborate and promote fitness on a local level, nationwide, through our physical therapist members."

SOI's mission is to provide year-round sport training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy, and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills, and friendships with their families, other Special Olympics athletes, and the community.

"We have made incredible gains in our health programming with the support of APTA. We are extremely excited to continue this partnership which benefits both Special Olympics athletes and APTA members," said Vice President, Health Programs Darcie Mersereau.

The American Physical Therapy Association represents more than 100,000 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and students of physical therapy nationwide. Visit MoveForwardPT.com to learn more about the types of conditions physical therapists treat, and find a physical therapist in your area.

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