

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Special Olympics
Colorado
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CONTACT:
Kathy Muffenbier
303.592.1361
km@specialolympicsco.org

Special Olympics Proclaims March 3rd as a Day to *Spread the Word to End the Word* and Help Stop Use of the Word “Retard”

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. -- The second-annual *Spread the Word to End the Word* awareness day is Wednesday, March 3. The worldwide campaign was created by youth, in conjunction with Special Olympics and Best Buddies International, to engage schools, organizations and communities by raising the consciousness of society about the dehumanizing and hurtful effects of the word “retard(ed)” and discouraging use of the R-word. Youth leaders are encouraging people to rally and pledge their support at www.r-word.org with the goal of reaching 100,000 pledges.

The *Spread the Word to End the Word* day will be devoted to educating and raising awareness of the positive impact individuals with intellectual disabilities have in our communities and why the use of the R-word is hurtful, even in casual conversation. Special Olympics and Best Buddies International hope that this day becomes an annually recognized day to raise awareness and ultimately encourage acceptance and respect for people with intellectual disabilities in everyday lives.

Students and schools across the U.S. and around the world continue to unite in their challenge for everyone to think before they speak. On March 3, 2010, youth will coordinate simultaneous pledge drives, campaigns, and educational opportunities through Spread the Word to End the Word, engaging communities and advocates to encourage everyone to pledge to stop the use of the word.

Several schools across the state of Colorado have plans to participate at various levels, including Conifer, Cherry Creek, Northridge (Greeley), Palmer (Colorado Springs) and Smoky Hill (Aurora) High Schools, with activities ranging from giving speeches to providing materials regarding the campaign. Regis University (Denver) and Colorado State University (Fort Collins) will have tables set up where students can learn more and pledge their support of the campaign.

Spread the Word to End the Word was created by youth with and without intellectual disabilities who participated in the Special Olympics Global Youth Activation Summit last February, held in conjunction with the 2009 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Idaho. The motivation for the campaign was driven by a united passion to promote the positive contributions people with intellectual disabilities make to communities around the world combined with a simple call to action -- a pledge to stop using a word -- that also symbolizes positive attitude change and a commitment to make the world a more accepting place for all people.

To get involved or find out more information on *Spread the Word to End the Word*, visit www.r-word.org or contact **Mandi DeWitt** of Special Olympics Colorado at 303.592.1361.

Since 1969, Special Olympics Colorado (SOCO) has been strengthening families, athletes and the very soul of our community through sports training and athletic competitions. Special Olympics Colorado provides year-round training and sponsors over 80 competitions at the area and state level in 20 sports for nearly 10,000 athletes statewide. With a base of more than 6,000 volunteers, hundreds of hours are donated allowing SOCO to support athletes of all ages and abilities, allowing them to build athletic, learning and social skills. Participation with other athletes, non-disabled peers (Unified Sports® partners), coaches, sponsors and volunteers builds confidence and creates opportunities to participate as productive and respected members of society by increasing public awareness of the athletes' capabilities. There is no cost to participate in Special Olympics.

Support. Volunteer. Coach. Compete. Special Olympics Colorado. Be a FAN.