



**Special Olympics**  
**New York**  
Be a fan™

**ACCEPTANCE**  
**Be a fan of**  
**RESPECT**  
**HUMANITY**  
**PASSION**  
**UNITY**

Special Olympics Project UNIFY was introduced to New York in the fall of 2008 as a year-long national project supported by the U.S. Department of Education. The goal of this initiative is to activate youth around the country in an effort to develop school communities where all young people are agents of change, creating school climates of inclusion, acceptance, respect and human dignity for all students with and without intellectual disabilities. After a successful launch, Project UNIFY started another year of advocacy and activities for 2009 and 2010.

New York's **SPREAD THE WORD TO END THE WORD** campaign was developed as part of Project UNIFY and relies upon the efforts of our youth advocates. This campaign has been created to raise awareness about the hurtful effects of using the word "retarded" to refer to people with intellectual disabilities. Although we have made great progress with educating our youth and communities on the impacts of such language, the change is too slow. Each use of the R-word as a synonym for a stupid action, a schoolyard taunt, or the punch line of a joke, slows our progress immeasurably. To combat the usage of such derogatory language, Special Olympics New York is naming March as **SPREAD THE WORD TO END THE WORD Awareness Month**, with March 3<sup>rd</sup> being the official statewide kick off. Throughout the month, youth and friends of our global movement will be hosting rallies and implementing grassroots outreach efforts to encourage members of their communities to take the pledge to stop using the "R" word in a demeaning manner. New York's R word pledge and more information on events occurring throughout the state can be found at: <http://www.nyso.org/spreadtheword.php>.

Special Olympics believes that through sports, young people can make a difference in friendships, schools and communities. Project UNIFY is youth driven, with a Youth Activation Committee (YAC) made up of young people representing middle schools, high schools and colleges nationwide. Members provide leadership to Special Olympics and Project UNIFY by participating in Special Olympics global events, providing advice and counsel on strategies to reach other youths, engaging in and promoting Special Olympics activities in their home environments, communicating and networking via Web connectivity with other youth around the country, and reviewing Project UNIFY materials for innovation and viability. Youth around the country have been engaged and empowered as advocates for people with intellectual disabilities, while promoting respect, dignity and inclusion by utilizing the programs and initiatives of Special Olympics.

For more information on Project UNIFY, please contact:  
Jamie Depasquale at (212) 661-5217 ext: 217 or [jdepasquale@nyso.org](mailto:jdepasquale@nyso.org)

Or for additional information specific to the "R" Word campaign, contact:  
Hilary Kellogg at (518) 388-0790 ext: 116 or [Hkellogg@nyso.org](mailto:Hkellogg@nyso.org)



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SPIRIT  
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- WHAT:** Kicking off on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, Special Olympics New York is recognizing March as “**Spread the Word to End the Word**” awareness month. This campaign has been created by youth activists from across the nation in an effort to raise the consciousness of society about the dehumanizing and hurtful effects of the word “retard(ed).”
- WHY:** Respectful and inclusive language is essential to the movement for the dignity and humanity of people with intellectual disabilities. However, much of society does not recognize the hurtful, dehumanizing and exclusive effects of the word “retard(ed).”
- HOW:** Pledge to stop using the word “retard(ed)” and instead, start using a new “R” word - **Respect**. New York’s R word pledge and more information on events occurring throughout the state can be found at: <http://www.nyso.org/spreadtheword.php>.

For more information on Project Unify and events occurring in NYC, please contact: Jamie DePasquale at (212) 661-5217 ext. 217 or [jdepasquale@nyso.org](mailto:jdepasquale@nyso.org)

Or

For additional information on the “R” word campaign and statewide events, please contact: Hilary Kellogg at (518) 388-0790 ext: 116 or [hkellogg@nyso.org](mailto:hkellogg@nyso.org)