

MEDIA CONTACTS

NEWS

For Immediate Release

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Tom Golisano Hosting 120 + Special Olympics Athletes Who Will Compete in Annual State Equestrian Championship in Florida Friday & Saturday May 1, 2
Special Olympics Chairman Tim Shriver Also Attending New This Year - Athletes Will Receive Dental Screening

April 30, 2015 (Clermont, Florida) - Special Olympics Florida will host its annual Equestrian Sports Championship on May 1-2 at the [Grand Oaks Resort & Museum in Weirsdale, Florida](#) (3000 Marion County Rd, Weirsdale, FL 32195).

The Grand Oaks Resort and its owner Paychex Chairman and philanthropist Tom Golisano are the official hosts of the 2015 Special Olympics Florida State Equestrian Sports Championship, providing 120 athletes with a first-class facility in which to compete.

New to this year's event, [Special Olympics Florida](#) will be offering free dental examinations to competing athletes as part of the Special Olympics Healthy Athletes® program.

NOTE TO MEDIA

The following individuals will be onsite on Friday, May 1. To arrange any interviews, please contact Lynn Erickson, Special Olympics, at 260-403-0553, or Danielle Spears, Special Olympics Florida, at 352-727-5097.

- Special Olympics Chairman Tim Shriver
- Special Olympics CEO Janet Froetscher
- 2015 Special Olympics World Summer Games equestrian competitor Christina Cooney
- Tom Golisano, Philanthropist and Chairman of Paychex
- [Golisano Foundation](#) Director Ann Costello

Competition starts on Friday, May 1, at 6:45 p.m. EST, following Opening Ceremonies in the

Equestrian Arena which begins at 5:45 p.m. On Saturday, May 2, competition will continue and Healthy Athletes exams will start at 9 a.m.

Special Olympics, the largest global public health organization specifically for people with intellectual disabilities, was able to expand its health work to look at year-round, inclusive health programming for people with intellectual disabilities after Grand Oaks owner Golisano provided a \$12 million gift in 2012. This approach to year-round health programming for people with intellectual disabilities, called Special Olympics Healthy Communities, includes follow-up care and wellness programming in addition to Healthy Athletes events. It was piloted in Special Olympics Florida and 13 other Special Olympics Programs around the world. In 2014, based on the success and impact of the pilot Healthy Community locations, Special Olympics announced that its health work now would involve Healthy Community recognition that each of the 220 Special Olympics Programs around the world could seek.

Last year, Special Olympics Florida provided 7,500 health exams and education in the areas of podiatry, physical therapy, health promotion, audiology, vision and dental, and focused on ensuring follow-up care was available for Special Olympics athletes who were referred after their exams. For Saturday's health event focused on dental care and health, Special Olympics athletes who participate in a Special Smiles screening receive hygiene education to ensure they do an adequate job of brushing and flossing, as well as help with medical referrals at no cost to the athlete.

"There are few non-profits that are as efficient towards their agenda and forward thinking as Special Olympics," said Tom Warriner, VP and General Manager of The Grand Oaks. "In addition to providing an international forum for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, their attention to the wellness of their athletes through their Healthy Communities program is without equal. It's why their founders and investors are continually supportive of both short and long term goals."

"Not only do we have a record number of athletes competing this year, but through our partnership with the Grand Oaks we also have a remarkable facility to host our competition," said Special Olympics Florida President/CEO Sherry Wheelock.

Like all Special Olympics competitive events, the State Equestrian Sports Championship is free to attend and is open to the public. For volunteer opportunities, event details or a full competition schedule, please visit www.specialolympicsflorida.org. Please contact Special Olympics Florida regarding athlete interviews and photography.

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About Special Olympics Florida

Special Olympics Florida provides year-round sports training and competition to children and adults with intellectual disabilities, at no cost to the athlete or their caregiver, as a means to achieve physical fitness, self-esteem, socialization skills, and the life skills necessary to be a productive, respected and contributing members of their communities. To learn more, visit, www.specialolympicsflorida.org

About the Golisano Foundation

The Golisano Foundation is one of the largest private foundations in the United States devoted exclusively to supporting programs for people with intellectual disabilities. Founded in 1985 with an initial gift of \$90,000 from B. Thomas Golisano, the founder and Chairman of Paychex, the Foundation now has more than \$28 million in gross assets and has awarded more than \$17 million in grants, about \$1.2 million annually, to non-profit organizations in a multi-county region

surrounding Rochester, New York that serve people with developmental disabilities.

The foundation is committed to opening doors, changing perceptions, and forging unprecedented partnerships to provide individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities with pathways to self-sufficiency, personal dignity, and the best possible expression of their abilities and talents throughout their lifetimes.

Through targeted initiatives, it is our vision that communities will encourage and commit to inclusion, acceptance and opportunity for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities; and provide services that empower individuals to make their way productively and creatively in their communities.

For more information see golisanofoundation.org

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