

I have tremendously enjoyed working on the Special Olympics project. This project not only introduced me to such kind and interactive athletes and caregivers, but also permitted me to share my own personal experiences and allowed me to build many meaningful friendships. A simple check-in call on the phone with the caregivers and athletes would turn into a 40 minute call because we became such good friends. They became my long-distance friends.

Without needing to be asked, athletes and caregivers would routinely stay in touch with me and would share pictures of their meals, tell me how their day is going, and share updates with me. My athletes from Maine and Louisiana would share all their funny stories with me and tell me about new fruits/vegetables or new meals that they tried and made. One athlete, despite having a speech disorder, would always tell me about her fishing competition and how her job is going. I appreciate the constant strive and determination in all my athletes! Another one of my athletes was so driven to be successful because of this program. He felt so supported and loved the feedback. He relentlessly showed up! He made sure to stay on top of tasks and update me! Another story to share, I recall one of my athletes, who was not happy to join this program, the first day that I spoke to her on the phone, she was not interested in talking to me. By the end of the program, she willingly called, chatted with me, and gave me updates about her meal plan and her life. This transformation makes me so happy! And Lastly, one of my caregivers loved to speak to me on the phone! She'd frequently tell me about all the new vegetables she is gardening! I loved to hear these updates because it just warms my heart.

To conclude, The Special Olympics project is not just about meeting athletes and improving their lifestyle, it's about connecting with one another and encouraging each other constantly.

Sometimes, athletes or caregivers are not educated about certain topics. Therefore, we create a safe space for the athletes and caregivers to make them feel seen, heard, and valued. The Special Olympics project is very rewarding and so impactful on not only the athletes but the caregivers as well.

I have seen from this project how encouragement, positivity, and community have the power to change someone's life for the better. I have nothing but AMAZING things to say about the Special Olympics Program. It is such a wholesome and meaningful project and one of the most rewarding experience! The athletes make me feel so inspired and I look forward to speaking with them every week. I am very lucky to have been part of this experience and I look forward to Special Olympics in Houston very soon!