



# Global Messengers **Region 2**

Inyo County, Kern County, and Los Angeles County



**Bryan Jackson**

**Kern County**

Bryan has been a Special Olympics athlete since 2020 and a Global Messenger since 2023, competing in Bocce, Bowling, Basketball, Floorball, and Softball in Kern County. A highlight of his journey was in October 2022, when he earned his first silver medal with the Kern County Smash at a softball tournament in Santa Clarita. He's also participated in various fundraisers like Tip-A-Cop, Law Enforcement Torch Run, and Arco Fuel the Flame. Grateful for the support of sponsors, volunteers, law enforcement, and fellow athletes, Bryan cherishes the kindness and encouragement he has received along the way.



**Cody Taylor**

**Los Angeles County**

Cody has been a Special Olympics Southern California athlete for over 21 years, with a passion for Basketball, Bowling, and Baseball. Initially shy, Cody has grown confident, making lifelong friends, and even mentoring new athletes. Since becoming a Global Messenger in 2017, he has spoken about how Special Olympics has transformed his life, helping him develop public speaking and life skills. His favorite memory is meeting Los Angeles Rams players at their stadium. Cody's passions include his family, his cat Mr. Tux, and inspiring others to experience the joy and opportunities Special Olympics offers.



**Jared Kozak**  
Los Angeles County

Jared has been a Special Olympics athlete for over 20 years, competing in Basketball, Track and Field, Bowling, Golf, and Bocce. Since becoming a Global Messenger in 2017, he has shared his story and promoted Special Olympics across Los Angeles and Orange County. Two standout moments include receiving a standing ovation after a speech at University of California and designing cleats for Rams punter Johnny Hekker, leading to a memorable game day appearance. Outside of Special Olympics, Jared works at Downtown Disney, acts on a Nickelodeon series, and takes various performance classes. Despite his busy life, being a Global Messenger and athlete remain his favorite roles, where he's known for making friends and giving the best hugs.



**Manasa Iyer**  
Los Angeles County

Manasa has been a Special Olympics Southern California athlete for 21 years, competing in Soccer, Swimming, and Basketball. A Global Messenger since 2015, she has promoted Special Olympics at numerous events. In 2009, she represented Special Olympics at the World Winter Games in Boise, Idaho. Through Special Olympics, Manasa has gained confidence and made many new friends.



**Michael León**  
Los Angeles County

Michael León has been a Special Olympics athlete since 2009, excelling in various sports despite living with autism and diabetes. As a Global Messenger, he represents Special Olympics at corporate, civic, and school events, and enjoys participating in Law Enforcement Torch Run activities. He is also a Health Messenger and serves on the Health Initiatives Subcommittee for Special Olympics Southern California. Michael is the Athlete Representative to the Law Enforcement Torch Run Committee and co-emcee for the annual Bill Shumard Hall of Fame Awards. Additionally, he works at Tierra Del Sol, teaching communication and healthy living classes.



**Samuel Lara**  
Los Angeles County

Samuel, 20, has been active with Special Olympics Southern California and the Unified Champion Schools Program for seven years. He plays Unified Sports, including Basketball, Bocce, and Soccer, and serves as Co-President of his high school's Unified Club. Alongside his Unified Partner, Kate, Sam has been a U.S. Youth Ambassador for Special Olympics North America (2021-2023) and a Global Messenger, promoting inclusion and helping schools start Unified programs. In 2025, they will attend a global summit at the Winter Games in Turin, Italy, to continue advocating for inclusion through unified sports.



**Sasha Cruz**  
Los Angeles County

Sasha has been a Special Olympics athlete for 11 years, participating in sports like Track, Softball, Swimming, and Bocce. Since becoming a Global Messenger in 2023, she has shared how Special Olympics is her second family and has taught her the joy of competition. One of her proudest moments was earning a silver medal in swimming at the USA Games in Orlando, and she cherishes the connections made through exchanging pins with athletes from other states. Outside of competition, Sasha is a college student at Cerritos College, enjoys photography, dancing, cooking with her mom, and spending time with her dog, Nala. Special Olympics has empowered her to be independent and advocate for herself and others.



**Jordan Nichole Wall**  
Los Angeles County

Jordan began competing in Special Olympics at 13, participating in Tennis, Bowling, Swimming, and Cheerleading. Born with Down syndrome and heart defects, Jordan faced numerous health challenges, including open-heart surgery, leukemia, and a car accident that left her in a body cast. Despite these hurdles, Special Olympics transformed her life, giving her the confidence to feel like a winner after years of competitive swimming where she often came in last. Since becoming a Global Messenger in 2017, Jordan has gained public speaking skills and made many friends through Special Olympics. Today, she is a student at Pasadena City College, a SAG actor, dancer, and social media content creator.