



April 27, 2023

Dear Chief Brandenburg,

Special Olympics Florida Monroe County is headed to 2023 State Summer Games May 18-22. We are forever grateful to the Key West Police Department for your continued support. I am writing to ask for any financial support you can give us to off set expenses for 120 headed to ESPN Wide World of Sports to compete and enjoy the full Special Olympics experience of Healthy Athletes.

Healthy Athletes offers screenings in eight disciplines, including Fit Feet, FUNfitness(Physical Therapy), Healthy Hearing, Health Promotion, Opening Eyes®, Special Smiles®, MedFest® and Strong Minds.

This year, we will be targeting the attendance to Strong Minds, as we have a high population of youth attending from our “at risk” population areas of Monroe County. Many of these young people will not have this opportunity outside of this state game.

Strong Minds is an interactive learning activity focused on developing adaptive coping skills. Competition provides a natural opportunity to develop active strategies for maintaining emotional wellness under stress, such as thinking positive thoughts, releasing stress and connecting with others. Athletes try a few different active coping strategies as they move through the stations. Before exiting, athletes identify the strategies they like best and volunteers provide them with visual reminders to use these tools in competition and in daily life.

Importance and Impact

Strong Minds events found that a large percentage of Special Olympics athletes in the U.S. face significant stresses on a daily basis, but have access to only a few adaptive coping strategies.

- 12% of athletes report having no coping strategies
- 62% mostly use avoidant strategies (e.g., not think the stressor), which is associated with increased depression
- 26% mostly use active strategies (e.g. doing something to help themselves to feel better), which is associated with increased well-being

Developing the skills presented in the Strong Minds screenings will give our athletes the tools they need to resist the peer pressure they experience at school in terms of substance abuse. We feel that this opportunity offers drug prevention, and promotes skills to create a safe community. Athletes will return to Key West with skills they would otherwise not had the opportunity to learn.

Special Olympics Florida – Monroe County

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Created by the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation for the benefit of persons with intellectual disabilities.



Healthcare professionals and students are trained to provide these screenings to persons with intellectual disabilities and autism. Our athletes will experience a high quality of education/support in the area of mental health from mental health professional they would have an opportunity to access in Monroe County. It is also important to note that the professionals are trained to work with our population, using terminology and techniques that are designed for their unique abilities.

Any donation that the Key West Police Department can make to Special Olympics Florida Monroe will be used to get our athletes to Special Olympic Florida State Games where they will have access to mental health screenings, education and support at the Strong Minds screenings.

I have attached a Fact Sheet about our event so that you can see they have two days to compete in their sport and also attend the Strong Minds Screening. We feel that this opportunity for our athletes will go a long way in the prevention of future mental health issues such as substance abuse, depression and other unhealthy behaviors.

Thank you for considering Special Olympics Florida Monroe County as beneficiary any forfeiture funds you may have available.

Ruth Holland

Ruth Holland
Sports Coordinator, Special Olympics Florida Monroe County