



SPECIAL OLYMPICS
USA GAMES
ORLANDO 2022

CHRIS TEICH

Gymnastics



For Special Olympics athlete, Chris Teich, confidence ties directly back to a key aspect of the Special Olympics Athlete Oath: Let me win but if I cannot win let me be brave in the attempt.

Chris Teich started his journey with Special Olympics' gymnastics program six years ago for what might sound to some like an unconventional reason: he wanted to be a ninja.

"When I was 13 I wanted to be an American Ninja Warrior and we decided that gymnastics would be a great way to build my strength," he says. "It has been a great place to make new friends and be able to compete. My favorite events are high bar and rings."

During high school, Chris also participated in the Special Olympics Unified Basketball and bowling teams, and has since continued to be involved in Special Olympics activities such as Capitol Hill Day, Athlete Leadership Council and club sports.

Chris values the coaching encouragement and life lessons he has received from Special Olympics since it has become a part of his life.

"Special Olympics means everyone should be included no matter your background. We are all unique and try to be the best we can be," he says.

Suzanne Teich, Chris' mother, has worked at Gallagher for the past 15 years as a Human Resources Consultant based in Rochester, New York and is thrilled about the company's partnership with Special Olympics.

"It is wonderful to know the company I work for supports and values the same things I do," she says. "Special Olympics is about so much more than sports. It's about inclusion and opportunity, building confidence and promoting the health and wellbeing of our athletes so they can be their absolute best."

Suzanne explains that because of Chris' intellectual disability, Down Syndrome, it takes him longer to learn something than his typical peers, but because of that, you celebrate those achievements and milestones so much more.

"Chris' winning smile and confidence have always served him well," she says. "He has big dreams and we have always encouraged him to work hard to achieve them."

In May 2021, Chris was invited to compete in gymnastics at the 2022 USA Games in Orlando, Florida. He is excited for the opportunity to compete with the team for gold—a dream shared by all gymnasts. The support from his hometown community of Rochester has always had a positive impact on his life both on and off the mat.

"It makes me feel loved," he says. "I am involved in a lot of different groups and activities around Rochester, and I've met so many amazing people. So many have reached out to congratulate me and offer their support."

Suzanne shares her son's enthusiasm for this next great adventure as a Special Olympics athlete. After about 16 months of not practicing through the program due to COVID-19, seeing firsthand the work he put in this year to rebuild his strength, as well as the tougher skills of independence, decision-making and self-reliance have made this achievement all the more enjoyable.

"Beyond the thrill of the Games, which is huge, the personal growth experience of this journey will be life-changing for him," she says. "I can't wait to see him compete and represent Team New York with all the confidence and personal strength he has worked so hard to gain."

From delivering the commencement speech at his high school graduation to drumming in a rock band, there seems to be nothing Special Olympics athlete Chris Teich does not have the confidence to achieve.

Chris Teich, USA Games Fundraising

Page: www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Christopher-Teich