



**Special Olympics**  
**Wisconsin**  
**Be a fan™**  
**Support. Volunteer. Compete.**

Greetings,

My name is Ally Armstrong, and I am an AmeriCorps Member with Special Olympics Wisconsin. One of Special Olympics' initiatives is to raise awareness about the harmful and hurtful effects of the word "retard or retarded". You can be a part of this movement by joining in the **Spread the Word to End the Word™** campaign, a collaborative partnership between Special Olympics, Best Buddies, and our supporters.

This campaign is a great way not only to spread awareness about the r-word but also to learn about the abilities of those with disabilities. Together students with and without disabilities can make a difference in their schools and communities, and **Spread the Word to End the Word™** is a great way to get started!

This packet includes general information about the **Spread the Word to End the Word™** campaign, a to-do list to help you get started, event ideas, examples of past campaigns, a list of talking points, and a commitment form to be filled out and returned.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or to discuss any ideas you have.

Best regards,

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**SPREAD THE WORD  
TO END THE WORD™**





# Be a fan

...of RESPECT

Spread the Word  
to End the Word™

Spread the Word to End the Word™ is an effort to raise the consciousness of society about the dehumanizing and hurtful effects of the word “retard(ed)” and encourage people to pledge to stop using the R-Word.

## Background

Over the years, the R-Word has become a common taunt used to make fun of others. Often unwittingly, the word is used to denote behavior that is clumsy, hapless, and even hopeless. But whether intentional or not, the word conjures up a painful stereotype of people with cognitive disabilities.

Realizing respectful and inclusive language is essential to the movement for the dignity and humanity of people with cognitive disabilities, the effort is spearheaded by college students, Soeren Palumbo (Notre Dame 2011) and Tim Shriver (Yale 2011), and led by young people, Special Olympics athletes, and Best Buddies participants across the country.

## Action

While most of the activities are centered annually in March, people everywhere can help Spread the Word throughout their communities and schools all year round. We're asking every person, young and old, to help eliminate the demeaning use of the R-Word. You can help us change the conversation and create a more accepting world for people with cognitive and developmental disabilities and all those people that may appear different, but who have unique gifts and talents to share with the world.

Take the pledge at [www.r-word.org](http://www.r-word.org) and help youth around the world encourage others to think before they speak.

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For More information, contact  
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Or visit [www.r-word.org](http://www.r-word.org)

# SPREAD THE WORD TO END THE WORD™

## To-Do List

### How to get Started on Your Campaign



1. Find a group of friends, classmates, teammates, or club members who want to start the campaign with you.
2. Ask a teacher, administrator, or staff member to be an advisor for your project.
3. Brainstorm ideas for what you want your campaign to look like.
4. Fill out your commitment form and send it in.
5. Receive your campaign kit\* and get started!

\* Your campaign kit will include the following: wristbands, tattoos, stickers, three t-shirts, five promotional items (selected on the commitment form), a t-shirt order form, a drawstring backpack order form, and additional information on how to get involved with Special Olympics in your community.





## EVENT AND ACTIVATION IDEAS

**Spread the Word to End the Word™** relies on grass-roots activities to garner the majority of the campaign's impact. Here are ideas on how you can participate locally in **Spread the Word to End the Word™**.

1. Hold a local pledge event at school or in your community. Set up a laptop to encourage people to sign the [www.r-word.org](http://www.r-word.org) pledge page on the spot and/or create a banner for people to sign on the spot.
2. Invite local Special Olympics athlete Global Messengers or Best Buddies Buddy Ambassadors to speak at an assembly.
3. Work with local sports teams to participate in a halftime event to promote **Spread the Word to End the Word™**.
4. Spread the word - samples/examples are included in this kit:
  - Talking points
  - Hang posters
  - Stickers
  - Send e-mails
  - Text / call your family and friends
  - Create your own **Spread the Word to End the Word™ Youth Rally**
  - Use your social networks on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Linked In
  - Join **Spread the Word to End the Word™** social networking pages (i.e. Facebook, Twitter)
  - Send an E-vite to friends to take the pledge and spread the word  
Use the new R-word Counter to see how many times your favorite website uses the R-word and then send the link to your friends – <http://www.rwordcounter.org>
5. Print and distribute leaflets throughout your community.
6. Notify the press. Call local radio shows and write letters to the editor of your local newspaper, samples are available.
7. Post a comment to an online social message board sharing your thoughts about the R-word and its abuse in our society.
8. Post your event's time and location in the community events section of your hometown newspaper or in your school newspaper or Web site.
9. Set up a booth at events or conferences.
10. Contact your local Special Olympics or Best Buddies office to learn how to get involved in **Spread the Word to End the Word™** events in your community.  
Special Olympics Wisconsin Website: [www.specialolympicswisconsin.org](http://www.specialolympicswisconsin.org)  
Best Buddies Wisconsin Website: [www.bestbuddieswisconsin.org](http://www.bestbuddieswisconsin.org)
11. Get teams together to participate in The Polar Plunge. See which team can raise the most support.
12. Host a unified sports scrimmage with your high school sports team and your local Special Olympics team.



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## Wisconsin Campaigns

There are many different ways to do a **Spread the Word to End the Word™** campaign. It can be as simple or as elaborate as you would like it to be. Here are just a few examples of some campaigns that have taken place in Wisconsin:



- Hold an informational table or booth (at lunch, sporting event, in a classroom, etc.)
- Wear **Spread the Word to End the Word™** shirts for a day; it's a good conversation starter
- Have a pledge drive (during lunch, sporting event, in a classroom, etc.)
- Invite a local Special Olympics athlete or Best Buddies Ambassador to come and speak at an assembly
- Create a video and show it on your school's television channel, or in a classroom



If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact:

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## Spread the Word to End the Word™ Action Kit

### KEY MESSAGES AND TALKING POINTS

It is time we **Spread the Word to End the Word™** and build awareness for society to stop and think about its' use of the R-word. That R-word is something hurtful and painful – “retard” or “retarded.” Most people don’t think of this word as hate speech, but that’s exactly what it feels like to millions of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families and friends. This word is just as cruel and offensive as any other slur. Visit [www.r-word.org](http://www.r-word.org) to make your pledge today.

- Young people around the world are taking a stand and raising awareness of the dehumanizing and hurtful effects of the words “retard” or “retarded” and are helping encourage others to think before they speak.
- Up to three percent of the world’s population have intellectual disabilities - that’s 200 million people around the world. It’s the largest disability population in the world, perhaps you know someone?
- We ask that you help us change the conversation and help eliminate the demeaning use of the R-word from today’s popular youth vernacular and replace it with “respect.” We are asking for your help in creating a more accepting world for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and all those people that may appear different, but have unique gifts and talents to share with the world.
- We’re asking every person - young and old - to help eliminate the demeaning use of the R-word –a common taunt used to make fun of others. Often unwittingly, the word is used to denote behavior that is clumsy, hapless, and even hopeless. But whether intentional or not, the word conjures up a painful stereotype of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It hurts. Even if you don’t mean it that way.
- People with intellectual and developmental disabilities are capable and enjoy sharing life experiences – listening to music, playing video games, watching the latest movies, and yes, having fun – as well as working together toward athletic excellence and mutually enriching one-to-one friendships as demonstrated constantly through Special Olympics and Best Buddies International. They can attend school, work, drive cars, get married, participate in decisions that affect them, and contribute to society in many ways.
- Special Olympics’ Multi-National Public Opinion Study of Attitudes toward People with Intellectual Disabilities, conducted by Gallup, reveals that throughout the world, over 60 percent of people *still* believe that people with intellectual disabilities should be segregated in schools and in the workplace. This is intolerable. We need massive attitude change now to attack and reverse the stigma that is destructive to the lives of people with intellectual disabilities and a barrier to growth.
- Did you know that by casually using the word “retard(ed)” to refer to an action as less than ideal you are making someone with an intellectual disability feel less than human - whether you mean to or not? Demeaning any of our fellow human beings by using inappropriate words toward any population negatively impacts all of us.



# Commitment Form

This form must be completed and returned before any promotional materials will be sent to your location.

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Club/Group Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher/Advisor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher/Advisor Contact Number: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Lead Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Lead Student Contact Number: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Please describe the plan for your campaign: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

When do you plan to kick-off your campaign? (approx. date) \_\_\_\_\_

Please list the five promotional items you would like to included in your kit. (Choose any combination of lanyards, Frisbees, and water bottles. Availability is on a first come first serve basis.) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Lead student's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher/Advisor's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send completed form to Ally Armstrong  
at [aarmstrong@specialolympicswisconsin.org](mailto:aarmstrong@specialolympicswisconsin.org)  
or by mail to  
Special Olympics Wisconsin  
Attn: Ally Armstrong  
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