



The following is a current listing of all the sports available by The Mesa Association of Sports for the Disabled.

If you have any questions about any of the sports listed below, please don't hesitate to contact Susan Byrne (susan.byrne@cityofmesa.org) or use our contact form located on the MASD website..

Special Olympic Sports

Special Olympics Baseball

The Mesa Association of Sports for the Disabled baseball division is a program for mentally and physically disabled individuals who enjoy the full benefits of participating in an athletic environment structured to their abilities. MASD players profit from the proven therapeutic and socialization benefits of participating in sports. It also strengthens their self-esteem, gives them a sense of teamwork, sportsmanship and fair play, which are the hallmarks of a structured sports program. There is no age limit in the MASD baseball division and everyone participates regardless of their limitations.

Special Olympics Basketball

Winter marks the start of the Special Olympics Basketball season. Special Olympics Basketball is designed for athletes ages 8 and up interested in learning basketball skills and/or playing in competitions. Athletes learn the skills of dribbling, passing, shooting, playing defense, etc. leading up to participation on a team. Those athletes who are not ready for team play can compete in individual skill events.

MASD holds a basketball clinic at the beginning of the season to assess each athlete's skill levels. Then the athletes are placed on appropriate teams based on their age and skill level. This enables each athlete to compete with athletes of similar abilities and enables everyone to participate at the best of their ability. Although

we call it a clinic and tryout, no one is cut from an MASD team and everyone participates and plays!

The basketball season begins in January and continues through April. Competitions include the East Valley Special Olympics Area Games and the Arizona Special Olympics state competition. Practices are held on weeknights and competition is held on weekends. There is no cost for this program.

Special Olympics Bocce

Special Olympics Bocce is designed for athletes ages 8 and up who are mentally disabled and interested in learning the sport of Bocce, an Italian version of lawn bowling dating back to the Middle Ages. Athletes learn the rules of the game and the strategies employed in play. Special Olympics Bocce usually begins in June and continues through October. There is no cost associated with this program.

Special Olympics Bowling

The MASD Special Olympics Bowling Program is a year-round program that provides instruction and practice in an after school/after work setting.

This program is designed for athletes who are mentally disabled ages 8 and up interested in learning bowling skills and/or bowling in competitions.

Athletes learn the fundamentals of the game of bowling and work on improving their scores every week. Practices are held on weekly leading up to competition in the East Valley Special Olympics Tournament and the Arizona Special Olympics State competition. In addition, MASD sponsors Unified Bowling that matches Special Olympians with non-Special Olympians on teams that compete against other unified teams. There is a bowling fee associated with this program and financial assistance is available if needed.

Special Olympics Cheerleading

The Special Olympics Cheerleading Program for MASD is designed for the mentally disabled athlete ages 8 and up interested in learning cheers and routines. The season for cheerleading runs from the middle of January through April.

The MASD Special Olympics Cheer squad has performed in the past at Special Olympic events, High School competitions, and Arizona Cardinal Games. In addition, the cheerleaders perform their routines in competition at the Special Olympics cheerleading competition and are judged by various cheering experts, including the ASU and Arizona Cardinal cheerleaders.

Practices are generally held on week nights or Saturdays during the

season. There is no cost for the Special Olympics Cheer program, although purchase of a cheer uniform may be necessary. Financial assistance for the purchase of the uniform is available for those who may require it.

Special Olympics Golf

Special Olympics Golf is designed for athletes ages 13 and up who are mentally disabled and interested in learning golf skills and/or playing in golf competitions.

Athletes learn the skills of putting, chipping, hitting long irons, etc. leading up to participation in competition. Those athletes who are not ready for competition can compete in individual skill events. The season generally runs from June through October. There is a greens fee associated with this program, but financial assistance is available. In addition, golf clubs are available for athletes who need them.

Special Olympics Gymnastics

Special Olympics Gymnastics is designed for athletes ages 8 and up who are mentally disabled and interested in learning gymnastics skills such as floor exercise, tumbling or balance beam.

Athletes learn skills as basic as forward and backward rolls in tumbling to skills as advanced as dismounts off apparatus, depending on their skill levels. Athletes are placed in the appropriate activity based on their skill levels. Special Olympics Gymnastics usually begins in February and continues through May. There is no cost associated with this program.

Special Olympics Soccer

Special Olympics Soccer begins in mid-September and continues through early December. Practices are held in the evenings and competitions take place on the weekends.

Soccer players are assessed for skill level and placed on a team with athletes of comparable skills. In addition, athletes who are not ready for team competition can compete in the individual soccer skills competition, where each athlete learns the skills of dribbling, passing, trapping, shooting, etc.

Competitions may include the East Valley Area Special Olympics Soccer Tournament, the Maricopa County Soccer Tournament, and the Arizona Special Olympics Soccer Tournament in Tucson.

Special Olympics Swimming

The Special Olympics Swimming program is designed for athletes ages 8 and up who are mentally disabled and able to independently

swim at least 25 meters without interruption.

The Special Olympics swim team is a competitive program and not designed to teach swim lessons to non-swimmers. Swim lessons are available through the Mesa Parks and Recreation Department for individuals interested in learning to swim.

Athletes in the Special Olympics program train to improve the quality of their strokes and increase their endurance. Depending on their skill levels, athletes may also learn new competitive strokes, such as the breaststroke and butterfly.

Special Olympics swimming usually begins in July and continues through October. Competitions include the East Valley Area Swim Meet usually held in September and the Arizona Special Olympics State Swim Meet held in October. There is no cost associated with this program.

Special Olympics Tennis

The MASD Special Olympics Tennis Program is designed for athletes ages 14 and up who are mentally disabled and interested in learning tennis skills and/or playing in competitions. The Special Olympics Tennis season runs from February through May. Athletes learn the skills of tennis such as: forehand and backhand swings, volleying, etc.; leading up to participation in competition.

Those athletes who are not ready for competition can compete in individual skill events. Potential athletes should currently be able to forehand strike a tennis ball bounced to them from 10 feet away at least 6 out of 10 times. There is no cost associated with the Special Olympics Tennis program and racquets can be loaned to those athletes who do not currently own one.

Special Olympics Track & Field

Spring marks the start of the Track & Field season. The season generally runs from February through May and practices are held on weeknights under the lights. Special Olympics Track & Field is designed for athletes ages 8 and up interested in competing in running, walking, throwing and jumping events. Special Olympics Track & Field is designed for those athletes who are mentally disabled. Events are also designed for athletes who have multiple disabilities (both mentally and physically disabled).

Running events include the 50, 100, 200, 400, 800 and 1500 meter runs plus the relays. Walking events include the 400, 800 and 1500 meter race walks. Field events include the long jump, standing broad jump, high jump, shot put and softball throw. The events for the athletes with multiple disabilities include wheelchair slalom events, power chair races and short sprints (please note however that these events are designed for the athlete who is both mentally

and physically disabled, unlike our sports for the Physically Disabled program). Athletes compete in events which are broken down by age group and gender.

The age groups are as follows:

Ages 8 to 11

Ages 12 to 15

Ages 16 to 18

Ages 19 to 21

Ages 22 to 29

Ages 30 to 39

and Ages 40 and over

There is no cost for this program.

Sports For The Physically Challenged

Archery For The Physically Challenged

Archery for the physically disabled is designed for athletes ages 10 and over who are interested in learning the skills necessary to target shoot independently.

Athletes will learn how to draw the nock the arrow, draw it back, aim and release. In addition, many athletes will learn how to score their shoot. Athletes may use adapted equipment such as the bow stand (attached to the wheelchair arms to hold the bow), trigger releases, mouth releases, etc. In addition, there are divisions for both the recurve bow and the compound bow.

Bows range from 20 lbs. to 45 lbs. Practices run from February through April. Equipment for Archery is provided but potential archers are encouraged to bring or develop their own adapted equipment. There is no charge for the Archery program.

Bocce For The Physically Challenged

Bocce is an excellent game of skill and strategy for athletes with all levels of physical disability. This is an ancient Italian game of lawn bowling that resembles a giant game of marbles. Bocce athletes are governed by the rules of the National Disabled Sports Association. Athletes are divided into ramp and non-ramp divisions based upon specific classification. A Bocce ramp can be used by an athlete in lieu of tossing the ball if the player cannot grip the ball. The ramp can be manually moved by the athlete or an assistant, if needed.

Bocce is an excellent game of strategy and skill and many of the contests are very exciting. The bocce season generally runs for 6 - 8 weeks in the spring. There is no cost for participating in this program, but annual membership in the NDSA is a requirement for competition.

Bowling For The Physically Challenged

The bowling program for physically disabled athletes is designed for athletes ages 8 and over. The bowling season runs from June through September.

The athletes may bowl using a variety of regular and adapted equipment, including ramps, push sticks, snap-handle bowling balls and electronic release systems.

Practices are held on weekends and participants work on improving their techniques and personal scores. Competitions are held locally and in Tucson. A bowling fee per game is charged by the bowling lanes. Financial assistance is available to athletes who may require it.

Goalball For The Physically Challenged

Goal Ball is a competitive game designed for blind athletes. Legally blind athletes can also compete using blindfolds. The is played on opposite ends of a gym with a basketball size hollow ball with bells inside, producing noise as it is rolled. The object of the game is to roll the ball past your opponent's goal line before they can block the ball. A point is scored when the ball crosses the goal line.

The MASD goal ball team practices once a week during the school year and competes in local and state competitions. There is no cost for participation in this program.

Power Soccer For The Physically Challenged

Power Soccer is a team sport designed specifically for people who use power (electric) wheelchairs in their everyday life. It is a highly competitive team sport, consisting of four players: a goalie and three forwards that is played on a basketball court using an 18 inch soccer ball. Anyone 6 years old and older who utilizes a power wheelchair can compete. The wheelchairs are outfitted with plastic foot guards in order to protect the athlete's feet and to provide for a surface to control the ball. Teams are categorized into 2 levels: Division I for the experienced, highly skilled, players; and Division II for those players who are learning the game and developing skills.

The Power Soccer season runs from September through May or June. The Mesa Association of Sports for the Disabled hosts a regional Power Soccer Tournament each November. The National tournament is held in June. There is no cost for participating in this program, but annual membership in the NDSA is a requirement for competition.

Swimming For The Physically Challenged

Swimming for the Physically Disabled is designed for athletes ages 8 or older who are able to swim 25 meters in a specific stroke without interruption. Some swimming events also permit the use of assistive devices.

This program is not intended to provide lessons to non-swimmers; Mesa Parks & Recreation offers swim instruction for physically disabled individuals.

Practices are held on the weekends beginning in February and continuing through May. Practices focus on improving strokes, increasing endurance and bettering personal times. Competitions include the Desert Challenge Games and the San Diego Multi-Sport Games. There is no cost for this program.

Table Tennis For The Physically Challenged

Table tennis for physically disabled athletes is offered through the local United States Table Tennis Association chapter.

MASD owns several competition table tennis tables that are completely wheelchair accessible. Local competition is available during the Desert Challenge Games. In addition, many regional and national competitions are available.

Track & Field For The Physically Challenged

The Mesa Association of Sports for the Disabled sponsors a Track & Field team every year for athletes who have a physical disability. The program is designed for athletes ages 5 and up. School age children do not have to be enrolled in a Special Education program in order to compete.

The season begins in January and continues through May. Competitions may include the Desert Challenge Games, the Tucson Victory Games, the Far West Wheelchair Games, Junior National Championships, and a variety of other National Championships. Athletes are evaluated based upon their functional abilities and placed into classifications so that they compete against athletes with similar functional abilities. They are also grouped based upon age and gender. Specific distances and implements utilized are determined by age and classification status. The age groups include:

Ages 5 & 6 (futures - minimal competition)

Ages 7 to 9

Ages 10 to 12

Ages 13 to 15

Ages 16 to 18

Ages 19 to 21

Ages 20 to 39 (adults)

Ages 40 and over (masters)

Track events can be run with no assistance, prosthetics, crutches, walkers, racing wheelchairs, etc. Blind athletes may use callers or tethered partners. The events include the 60, 100, 200, 400, 800, 1500 and 5000 meter races plus some relays. Field events include shot put, javelin, discus, club throw, soft shot, softball throw and long jump. There is no cost for this program, but annual membership in a disabled sports organization (WSUSA, NDSA, DSUSA, Les Autres, etc) is a requirement for competition.

**Wheelchair Basketball For The Physically Challenged
The Banner Wheelchair Suns Basketball Team and the Mesa Association of Sports for the Disabled have formed a partnership to provide basketball skills training and development to wheelchair athletes ages 8 to 18. Coach Gary Ven John of the Suns reports that so far, the program has been a big success.**

The intent of the program is to teach young athletes the fundamentals of passing, catching, shooting, dribbling and playing defense with the objective of developing enough young players to field a junior wheelchair basketball team!

Potential athletes must be able to catch a basketball bounced from ten feet and chest pass to a partner standing eight feet away. Adaptations can be made to the height of the basket for our younger athletes.

Practices take place on weekends and weeknights in Mesa. Our hope is that we can attract enough junior athletes to field a team for future competitions!