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**MDI Announces Partnership of the 2026 Special Olympics USA Games**

*Collaboration aims to create meaningful, tech-powered career readiness pathways for athletes around the world*

**MINNEAPOLIS, Minn.** – [MDI](#), an established champion for empowering individuals with disabilities through meaningful employment opportunities and training, today announced its official partnership with **the 2026 Special Olympics USA Games**. This collaboration unites two organizations with deep-rooted commitments to inclusion, empowerment, and innovation in supporting people with intellectual disabilities.

The 2026 Special Olympics USA Games will be held in Minnesota, MDI's home state, making the partnership particularly fitting. The Games will emphasize breaking down barriers to employment for people with intellectual disabilities, a mission that closely mirrors MDI's work for over six decades. Since its founding in 1964, MDI has provided employment to thousands of Minnesotans with disabilities. Today, more than half of MDI's workforce identifies as having a disability, reinforcing its longstanding dedication to inclusive employment.

"This partnership goes beyond shared values, it's a movement," said Eric Black, president and CEO of MDI. "Together, we're harnessing technology to advance career readiness and create real opportunities for athletes with intellectual disabilities. Through MDI's Unified Work program and virtual reality training, we're preparing athletes not just for jobs, but for meaningful careers in Minnesota and across the globe."

"We are incredibly proud to partner with MDI, a true champion for the employment of people with intellectual disabilities," said Christy Sovereign, CEO of the 2026 Special Olympics USA

Games. "This partnership is a powerful statement about the dignity of work and the importance of creating pathways to meaningful careers. Through our joint efforts, we are not only preparing athletes for the future but also showcasing the immense value they bring to the workforce and our communities."

A key element of the partnership will be the **prominent integration of Unified Work powered by MDI**. Launched in 2017, Unified Work is based on the belief that removing employment barriers empowers people to succeed. The program develops leadership, career readiness, and soft skills tools essential for thriving in professional environments.

While Unified Work was initially created for people with disabilities, its success has extended to others facing barriers to employment, underscoring the universal power of inclusive practices.

As part of its partnership with the 2026 Special Olympics USA Games, MDI will launch several innovative initiatives to support career readiness for athletes with intellectual disabilities. Among them is the piloting of a new learning management system and virtual reality career training, developed in collaboration with MDI's Unified Work program.

These efforts aim to connect Special Olympics athletes and others with disabilities to inclusive employers, expand access to meaningful careers, and accelerate Unified Work's ambitious goal of creating **one million learning experiences by 2030**.

MDI's involvement in the 2026 Special Olympics USA Games will extend beyond the Athlete Village, reaching communities across Minnesota through a variety of engaging and inclusive experiences. Fans and attendees can look forward to activities at the Fan Fest on the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus and at the Mall of America in Bloomington, among others.

These activations will not only showcase Unified Work's impact but also celebrate the value and contributions of people with disabilities throughout Minnesota and beyond.

### **About MDI & Unified Work**

MDI is a trusted Minnesota manufacturer and nonprofit social enterprise providing employment opportunities and services for people with disabilities. Along with producing high-quality plastic containers and offering assembly and packaging services nationwide, MDI fosters an inclusive workplace where employees build confidence, independence, and purpose. Central to its mission is the Unified Work program, which uses innovative training including virtual reality to prepare individuals with disabilities and others facing employment barriers for meaningful careers. To learn more, visit [mdi.org](https://mdi.org) or [unifiedwork.com](https://unifiedwork.com).

### **About 2026 Special Olympics USA Games**

The 2026 Special Olympics USA Games—scheduled for June 20-26, 2026, across Minnesota's

Twin Cities with sports competitions at the University of Minnesota and the National Sports Center in Blaine—is a national celebration of inclusivity, changing perceptions and the ability of the human spirit rising above limitations. The USA Games, with co-presenting partners Jersey Mike’s Subs and Unitedhealthcare, will be one of the biggest U.S. sporting events of the year, drawing tens of thousands of fans to celebrate the ability of over 3,000 incredible athletes from all 50 states as they compete in 16 Olympic-type team and individual sports. As a state with a long history of championing diversity, equity and inclusion, the USA Games now bring an unrivaled opportunity to spark new energy around the Special Olympics movement and create a lasting legacy of positive change.

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