

## CAREGIVER, INC. IS LOOKING FOR SPECIAL OLYMPICS VOLUNTEER COACHES FOR A DOZEN NEW TEAMS IN NORTH TEXAS



### Requirements? Have a big heart and enjoy having a good time!

[Caregiver, Inc.](#), a Fort Worth, Texas-based family of companies that provides home living, day habilitation, care coordination and related services for intellectually and developmentally disabled ([IDD](#)) individuals through multiple subsidiaries in four states, is stepping up their Special Olympics game this winter.

“[Special Olympics](#) is very important to families and individuals served by Caregiver and our affiliate companies,” said Mark Lashley, president and CEO of Caregiver, with over 3500 employees.

here in North Texas to bolster our clients’ participation in a full range of Special Olympics team sports.”



*A Special Olympics basketball team 2017.*

The ramp-up will make it possible for hundreds of Caregiver clients to take part in learning and playing a full range of team sports, from bowling and basketball to volleyball, bocce to softball, soccer and track, among others. Then, teams will compete and in statewide Special Olympics games in 2019.

Participants will include individuals served by Caregiver’s North Texas affiliate companies and supported by staff and community volunteers, including a dozen or more coaches for the teams. Initially, [Daybreak Community Services Inc.](#) and [Southern Concepts, Inc.](#) sites will field teams.



Interested in becoming a Caregiver [Special Olympics](#) volunteer coach? You’ll become a role model to help build character and instill the sports skills and spirit that develop true athletes.

Call 954-398-0914 or email [brian.estler@cg-idd.com](mailto:brian.estler@cg-idd.com).



“With our recent expansion, we saw the value of adding a dedicated Special Olympics events coordinator, Brian Estler (above), to the headquarters team. He will direct a pilot project

Requirements to participate? Have a big heart and enjoy having a good time! That goes for coaches and athletes alike, according to Estler.

“For our North Texas locations, we are looking for about nine additional coaches,” said Estler, who before joining Caregiver was with the Longhorn Council, Boy Scouts of America, where, as Senior Program Executive, he coordinated events with thousands of volunteers and attendees and managed 17 Cub Scout Day camps. Brian was tasked with recruiting and coordinating volunteers on an ongoing basis in that role as well as when he was with the Daniel Boone Council in North Carolina. Daniel Boone Council was the first Council to have a Special Needs Unit arrive at the 2013 National Jamboree in West Virginia. The unit received special recognition in 2014.



“Special Olympics athletes participate in more sports and at higher levels than ever before,” he stressed, “and such success can be attributed directly to the coaches.”

Volunteer coaches are role models who help build character and instill the sports skills and spirit that develop true athletes, according to the [Special Olympics Texas website](#). More information about coaching is available on the site. As well, interested individuals can call Brian Estler at 954-398-0914 to learn about North Texas coaching options.



*Joseph, Dominick and James at a recent bowling practice.*

“We’re dedicated to helping each player increase his or her self-worth, ability, courage, and capacity to grow and improve,” said Estler, who in addition to heading up the efforts, will also coach bowling, basketball and bocce for two teams in Fort Worth.

Fort Worth is in Caregiver’s North Texas service region, one of four in Texas; the region is fielding athletes through [Daybreak](#) and [Southern Concepts](#) offices in Benbrook, Desoto, Fort Worth, Granbury, Benbrook and Lancaster. [Lancaster Recreation Center](#), among others, is offering practice space for teams.

Additional North Texas Daybreak and Southern Concepts locations are in Dallas, Carrollton, Mexia, Corsicana, Denton, Temple, and Bryan/College Station. Statistically, Caregiver affiliates serve 800 clients in the North Texas region and 2200 throughout Texas.

Caregiver’s Special Olympics team practices began in late October and will continue through year end 2018. Team events begin in early 2019.

Daybreak’s North Texas Regional Director Debbie Youngblood believes having a SO coordinator has been a godsend. According to Youngblood, since his arrival in August, Brian formed the delegation (necessary for [SOTX](#) approval to participate), gathered doctors’ releases from participants, began forming teams, and is organizing logistics around practices as well as recruiting volunteers. Teams often have as many as 20 participants. And Youngblood is confident the teams will fill quickly.

“This provides opportunities for our clients, families, staff, caregivers, other Caregiver employees, and the community at large to be involved in competitions, from intramurals to official games,” Youngblood emphasized. “Our staff and the direct support caregivers are excited.

“Brian has even worked with area colleges and universities to recruit volunteers, often the hardest part of fielding teams for the Special Olympics,” she continued. “Brian is doing a fantastic job.”

Fort Worth Area Director Marnette Simon, who works in the [Daybreak Fort Worth Cleburne Road](#) office, agrees. “Our families see this as a positive interaction, a way for community engagement and exposure,” she stated. “To watch clients and family members have the opportunity to be around others and to be involved in a meaningful project is something we all can look forward to.”

Youngblood added: “Of course, it also provides wonderful physical exercise to the limits and capabilities of each of participant!”

But nothing happens without interested volunteers becoming coaches and assisting with practices and competitions.

“Volunteers benefit greatly, developing empathy and understanding,” Youngblood noted. “And they can even to gain valuable community service hours.”

Estler stressed that volunteer coaches are required to go through an education and a coach [certification process](#) to learn the skills necessary to help athletes reach their sports potential. Depending on background and experience, different options are available to become certified. Experienced and knowledgeable Special Olympics Texas instructors will provide the resources needed.

“Nathan Elder from University of North Texas Health Science Center will be helping as an Assistant Coach in the Fort Worth area. We want our Special Olympics team coaches to have big hearts and enjoy having a good time,” stated Estler. “In May we’ll hold a Family Special Olympics Fun Day to include all the different teams and sports, coaches, volunteers, and participants. Expect scrimmages, hayrides and a cookout in an inclusive, fun family atmosphere.”

Caregiver is fully committed to supporting the Special Olympics both through financial contributions and in increasing participation, according to Mark Lashley. “SOTX is a wonderful organization, and we are very excited and proud of our support.”



*The Champs brothers at a hockey game recently.*

Advocacy extends throughout the organization. Caregiver, Inc. board member Aly Champs (above right), managing director at DW Healthcare Partners, has been a Special Olympics advocate since he was 17 years old. While a high school student at Thornhill Secondary School in Toronto, Ontario, he recruited over 50 individual volunteers to assist a newly-formed Special Olympics swim team, the York South Stingrays, on which his younger brother Fareed Champs was an athlete/participant. For many years thereafter, Champs helped in various capacities, culminating in his joining the board of Special Olympics Ontario in 2018.



*Tevin Clerkley at a bowling practice this month.*

“I am very grateful for the opportunity,” Champs said, “and hope to be able to contribute positively to the growth of the movement in Canada as well as here in Texas through my efforts with Caregiver.”

Caregiver president for Texas operations Mason Morgan highlighted that hiring Estler assures SO participation opportunity and efficiency going forward.

“To maximize and make efforts efficient at each level, Caregiver centralized SO support by creating the role and hiring the professional expertise,” said Morgan. “Brian Estler is enabling even greater focus on Special Olympics.”

Estler’s efforts will provide team participants, volunteers and family members with the administrative and organizational support necessary for everyone in the field to be successful.

There are multiple practices and events that led up to the Special Olympics, so organization, coordination and communications to all involved is critical to making it fun and successful.

If successful after piloting the program in their North Texas region, Caregiver anticipates roll out in their other service areas in Texas, Tennessee, Indiana, and Ohio. Success will be measured by participant engagement and levels of satisfaction with support provided.

“Certainly, our increased participation will be a boon for Special Olympics Texas, too,” added Debbie Youngblood. “How wonderful to get more and more teams involved – the more the better!”

If interested in more information about Caregiver’s Special Olympics North Texas program or to explore the full range of volunteer opportunities near you, please call 954-398-0914 or email [Brian Estler](#).

## ABOUT SPECIAL OLYMPICS TEXAS

In 1969, Special Olympics Texas held its first competition. In 2019, the 50th Annual Summer Games will be heading to San Antonio. Special Olympics Texas provides opportunities for more than 58,800 Texas children and adults with intellectual disabilities to realize their potential, develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage and experience joy and friendship. For more, visit <http://www.sotx.org>.

## ABOUT CAREGIVER, INC.

[Caregiver, Inc.](#) is a privately-held company with over 3500 employees within the headquarters support group and branded affiliate organizations in four states. The affiliates provide intermediate, home and community care services to nearly 2800 individuals who qualify as developmentally or intellectually disabled or impacted by related conditions. Caregiver, Inc. was formed in 2015 and now includes these affiliates: [Unified Care Group](#), [Southern Concepts](#), [River Gardens](#), [Daybreak Community Services Inc.](#), [St. Giles Living Centers](#), [DSA of Indiana](#), [HHC of Ohio](#), and [Omni Support Services of Tennessee](#). All have similar service offerings and strong reputations in their local communities. Caregiver services include supported home living, family protective services, case coordination, nursing services, respite services, day habilitation, psychology services, dental treatment, specialized therapies, adaptive aids, minor home modifications, and supported employment. Caregiver president and CEO is Mark Lashley (left).  
Company headquarters are at 4100 International Plaza, Suite 800, Fort Worth, Texas 76109.

