

Special Olympics Kansas to hold virtual summer games

Special Olympics Kansas (SOKS) athletes who have been sidelined by COVID-19 will lace up their tennis shoes and hit the outdoors to participate in the 2020 Virtual Summer Games.

In-person games were scheduled for June 5-7 in Maize, Kansas, but concerns about the spread of COVID-19 and the risk to people with underlying health issues caused the games to be cancelled.

“Special Olympics serves athletes with intellectual disabilities and many are in the highest at-risk level for COVID-19,” Heather Waters, SOKS representative said. “We know our athletes want to get together and train and compete, but our number one priority is keeping them safe and healthy. Having in-person games in early June is just not possible this year.”

Athletes have been sidelined since early March when state basketball competition was cancelled due to COVID-19 cases and spread in Kansas.

State powerlifting competition was also cancelled in April.

Athletes who participate in the virtual games will be able to choose one of six categories of competition ranging from running events to wheelchair competition. They are also able to participate in a 1-mile run and a bonus Unified Soccer Dribble event where athletes will partner, virtually, with a teammate to complete a soccer dribbling course.

All events are able to be completed at athletes’ homes with common household objects as substitutes for traditional sports equipment.

Now through May 29 athletes will train at home and then record their best times and/or results. On June 5, the original start date of the Summer Games, SOKS will host an online Opening Ceremony with videos from statewide law enforcement agencies running the ceremonial Torch Run, athletes signing the National Anthem, and athletes reciting the Special Olympics Athlete Oath.

Three other virtual events will take place between June 5 and 7 online: a talent show, trivia tournament and dance party featuring Kansas City DJ Brian B. Shynin from Hot 103 Jamz.

Results from the athlete’s competition will be divisioned by age, gender and ability level and awards will be announced online from June 5 to 7 as well.

**For more information about Summer Games visit
kssso.org/virtual-summer-games/.**