



NEWS RELEASE

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SPECIAL ATHLETES AWARDED FOR THEIR SPECIAL SMILES

Not all the winners at the recent Special Olympics IX National Games in Adelaide were on the track or field with one special athlete recognised for their oral health.

Twenty-six year old Ehren Keys from Chapman, Australian Capital Territory, was awarded the Special Olympic's Special Smile Award by dentists from the Australian Dental Association (SA Branch).

A soccer player at the games, Ehren was given the Special Smile Award for his excellent oral hygiene, Ehren has no decay or fillings, and because his beaming smile was highly infectious and spread quickly to all around him.

Australian Dental Association (SA Branch) President Dr. Sharon Liberali said: "Ehren's smile spoke a language understood by everyone and seemed to encapsulate the spirit of the Special Olympics."

Runners up were Mel Eustice from Turrumurra in New South Wales and Ruben Dua from Stuart Park in the Northern Territory. The Junior Special Smile Award went to 10-year old Aaron Costello from Banks, Australian Capital Territory

The awards were part of the Special Olympics Special Smiles® program. The program, run by the Australian Dental Association (SA Branch) gave all the athletes at the games access to a dental screening.

The Australian Dental Association (SA Branch) put together a team of eight local and three interstate volunteer dentists, to provide the screenings along with seven local oral health auxiliaries providing oral hygiene advice.

Special Smiles is part of the worldwide Special Olympics Healthy Athlete Program, which currently offers screenings in seven key areas – Special Smiles (Dentistry), Fit Feet (Podiatry), FUNFitness (Physical Therapy), Health Promotion (Better Health and Wellbeing), Healthy Hearing (audiology), MedFest (Sports Physical Exam) and Opening Eyes (Vision).

The program gives every athlete an opportunity to be screened, their health monitored and education provided on healthy lifestyle choices. Health specialists are able to identify problems that may need follow-up.

Referrals can also be made to local health professionals including dentists for immediate treatment, where appropriate.

The data collected during the screenings in Adelaide will be added to the world's largest and highest quality health database on individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Since its inception in 1997, the Healthy Athletes Program has established a presence in more than 100 countries.

Its influence is evident with more than 76,000 healthcare professionals trained and free health screenings provided to more than 700,000 athletes.

For more information, visit http://www.specialolympics.org/healthy_athletes.aspx

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