Annual Meeting session to feature Special Olympics athletes

APHA work focuses on inclusion, disability health

Health equity means that all people can reach the highest standard of health, including people with disabilities. Striving toward that goal, APHA is ramping up its work on inclusive health, which calls for the deliberate inclusion of people with disabilities in policies, programming and services.

As part of its ongoing inclusive health work, APHA is also working with the Council on Education for Public Health to look at intentionally including people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in processes such as identifying barriers to health and providing input about health equity in policies.

We can and will make our country and the broader world a much better place. We can advance. We will make our little drops of water into a mighty ocean.

Thank you.

— Julia Haskins

Photo by Gregory Rec, courtesy Portland Press Herald/Getty Images

Zachary O'Brien, 10, celebrates his third-place finish in his heat of the 100-meter dash at the Cumberland County Special Olympics competition in April in Buxton, Maine. APHA is partnering with the Special Olympics for an Annual Meeting session.

Health equity is critical to people with intellectual disabilities, who have disproportionately worse health outcomes compared with the general population. According to the Special Olympics, they are more likely to have chronic conditions such as asthma, diabetes and cardiovascular disease and are also more likely to have multiple chronic conditions. Many of the chronic conditions affecting people with intellectual disabilities can be prevented with improved access to health care services, said Stephanie Corgkett, manager of external health communications for the Special Olympics.

“The reason we’re focusing on this group is to really right this injustice,” she told The Nation’s Health. “And by thinking about inclusive health for this population, it can change your mindset, it can improve access for everybody.”

The Special Olympics is highlighting such health inequities with its new International Center for Inclusive Health, which offers resources for incorporating inclusive health practices within and outside public health. Corgkett said the center aims to be a community space in which people can communicate about inclusive health, share resources and support one another. The center also offers information on inclusive health practices specific to health care providers, fitness and wellness professionals, professional associations and businesses.

For more information on the Center for Inclusive Health, visit https://inclusivehealth.specialolympics.org. The APHA Past President Session, number 3227, is Monday, Nov. 12, at 1 p.m. For more information, visit www.apha.org/annualmeeting.