

# UPPER KEYS SCHOOLS BUILD THRIVING SPECIAL OLYMPICS PROGRAM

By **Contributed** - February 28, 2025



*Special Olympics participants from Key Largo School pose with the National Unified Champion banner.*

Two Upper Keys schools were honored as Special Olympics National Banner Schools for the 2024-25 school year.

Key Largo School has long been a leader in Unified Champion Schools, serving as the district's founding school for Unified programs. Coral Shores High School became the district's first high school to be named a Unified Champion School, continuing the legacy as students from Key Largo School transitioned into high school. Together, these two schools have built a thriving Special Olympics Florida program,

offering the Young Athletes Program (YAP) for ages 2-4, Little Elites, Rising Stars, Unified Flag Football, Unified Soccer and Unified Cheer. Over the past eight years, their dedication has led to multiple state championship titles in flag football, soccer, cornhole and bocce.



For more than five years, the Ocean Reef Community Foundation has played a pivotal role in the growth and success of these programs in the Upper Keys. Thanks to the foundation, the 2024-2025 school year marks a milestone, with each school now fielding a Unified Cheer Team set to compete in the upcoming summer season. Their uniforms, essential to fostering team spirit and inclusion, would not have been possible without the foundation's support.



*Special Olympics participants from Coral Shores High School and staff next to a Special Olympics National Unified Champion banner. CONTRIBUTED*

The Monroe County School District remains committed to expanding Unified Programs across all schools. A Special Olympics Unified Champion School fosters an inclusive climate, emphasizing collaboration, engagement and respect among all students and

staff. Schools earning National Banner recognition demonstrate an unwavering commitment to inclusion, having met 10 national standards of excellence — benchmarks established by a national panel from Special Olympics and the education community.



Key Largo School and Coral Shores High School join three existing National Banner Schools in Monroe County – Horace O’Bryant School, Poinciana Elementary and Treasure Village Montessori. The district has 10 Unified Championship Schools.

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