

SPREAD THE WORD PLEDGE DAY TOOLKIT



SPREAD THE WORD ANNUAL DAY OF AWARENESS

Wednesday, March 6, 2024

**SPREAD
THE WORD** 
INCLUSION



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**SPREAD THE
WORD
>>
INCLUSION**

**SPREAD THE WORD
TO END THE WORD.**

Founded by youth leaders Soeren and Tim in 2009 as Spread the Word to End the Word®, the campaign focused its first 10 years on addressing a particularly powerful form of exclusion: the word 'retard(ed)'. Over 10 years, leaders and self-advocates collected millions of digital and physical pledges from supporters committing to end the R-word. Each pledge was a personal commitment to acknowledge the hurt caused by the R-word and to be respectful in the words and actions taken towards people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

With leadership from Special Olympics and Best Buddies, and support from hundreds of other advocacy organizations, the campaign grew from a handful of events in 2009 to reaching thousands of schools by 2018. In 2019, Spread the Word to End the Word became Spread the Word®, with a focus not just on the elimination of a word but on the creation of a new reality: inclusion for all people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The global engagement campaign remains committed to empowering grassroots leaders to change their communities, schools, and workplaces, now through a call to their peers to take action for inclusion. With this change, Spread the Word will give community leaders around the world the tools needed to create socially inclusive places to learn, work, and live.

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1

Why is this campaign so important?

Excluding, dehumanizing, and demeaning language has a hurtful impact on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Therefore, cultivating a respectful and inclusive language is an essential part of our inclusion movement. It also means speaking up against the wrong and demeaning use of the R-word in conversations. It is part of an educational effort that showcases that language informs attitudes and attitudes impact actions.

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2

What does the Spread The Word campaign stand for?

People with intellectual and disabilities (ID) still face exclusion, social isolation, and social abuse in schools, workplaces, and communities. This prevents us from building truly inclusive societal structures, where we can learn and grow together.

To drive change and help create a more inclusive society, Spread the Word to End the Word® was founded in 2009 by college students Soeren Palumbo (Notre Dame 2011) and Tim Shriver (Yale 2011).

The Spread the Word Inclusion campaign - as part of Special Olympics and supported by Best Buddies and our partners - is aimed at showcasing the impact of inclusive language and actions so that the discrimination of people with intellectual disabilities can come to an end.

Spread the Word Inclusion is led and continuously re-imagined by our youth activists. Their efforts are designed to rally schools, organizations, and communities to commit to the inclusion and acceptance of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

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3

When is the annual day of awareness?

In 2024, the annual day of awareness is held on **Wednesday, March 6**. This is commonly referred to as the “Spread the Word Pledge Day”.

While most activities are centered on or near that awareness day in March, people everywhere are encouraged to spread the word throughout their communities and schools throughout the year through pledge drives, rallies/assemblies, and online activation.

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"The world would be better if all people were valued, respected, embraced, included."

4

How do I take the pledge?

Students and educators are encouraged to sign their school's pledge banner, which is provided by Special Olympics Iowa and Best Buddies Iowa. Your school will receive the banner in the mail.

Pro Tip: consider have individuals write their name on post-it notes instead of writing directly on the banner so it can be reused each year!

Your school is encouraged to invite family, friends, and community members to join in by taking the pledge on our website:
www.spreadtheword.global/pledge

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PEP RALLY/ASSEMBLY TALKING POINTS

Today, we celebrate the Spread the Word Annual Day of Awareness. More than ever, the world needs action for inclusion. Old and new divisions are leading to exclusion and social isolation. We are missing out on opportunities to learn and grow together. People with intellectual and developmental disabilities know this better than almost anyone, as many of the nearly 200 million people with IDD globally continue to be marginalized and excluded in schools, workplaces, and communities around the world.

But it doesn't need to be this way. An inclusive world can be created through individual acts of inclusion - finding and welcoming those who have been left to become teammates and friends. We believe that inclusion is a skill that we all can practice - and when we do, we become better at including all people. That's why we are asking everyone to pledge to include, to commit to an act of inclusion in their school, workplace, or community. These actions can be as simple as sitting with someone alone at lunch, inviting someone to join a pick-up sports game, or welcoming someone. There is much left to do to end exclusion, so we are calling on all people to pledge to include. Pledge to include online at www.spreadtheword.global or on our school's pledge banner.

Pro Tip: Consider utilizing a representative from your Special Olympics Iowa and/or Best Buddies chapter (such as a Special Olympics Unified Pair or Best Buddies Ambassador) to share their personal story of the power of inclusion.

SHARE YOUR PLEDGE BY TAGGING

@PLEDGETOINCLUDE

@SPECIALOLYMPICSIA

@BESTBUDDIESIA

**ON FACEBOOK, TWITTER, AND
INSTAGRAM AND USING
#PLEDGETOINCLUDE
USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO INVITE
OTHERS TO JOIN YOU.**

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CALL TO ACTION

1 TAKE THE PLEDGE: Make your commitment to spread inclusion by taking the pledge online at www.spreadtheword.global/pledge or by signing your school's banner.

2 CHALLENGE OTHERS TO PLEDGE: Invite those in your school, workplace, or community to make their commitment to spread inclusion by sharing the online pledge or hosting a physical pledge drive event.

3 PRACTICE WHAT YOU PLEDGE: To create an inclusive world, we must *practice inclusion* with our actions. Sit next to someone alone at lunch. Be a teammate or friend to someone who has been excluded. Educate classmates and colleagues about the gifts and values of all people. There are many ways to practice inclusion - make your commitment to one and do it.

4 SHARE YOUR STORY: Use your social network to share why you Spread the Word for Inclusion. Let's get others involved in the movement!



**PLEDGE TO INCLUDE
AND COMBAT THE
HURTFUL AND
DEHUMANIZING
EFFECTS OF
EXCLUSION.**

WWW.SPREADTHEWORD.GLOBAL/PLEDGE