

Heidi Adamski and Colleen Langlais, both from CT have been working as physical therapists screening athletes from around the world as part of FUNFitness, a segment of Healthy Athletes. "Special Olympics Healthy Athletes helps athletes to improve their training and competition by focusing on overall health and fitness. This is achieved through screenings such as FUNFitness. FUNfitness is a program to assess and improve athlete's flexibility, strength, balance and aerobic capabilities; to educate coaches, families/caregivers and athletes on flexibility, strength, balance and aerobic abilities; and to provide a hands-on opportunity for athletes to learn more about physical therapy."

In February 2009, Heidi and Colleen attended the Special Olympics World Games in Idaho. They worked with therapists from all over the nation and all over the world. They screened over 100 athletes a day.

Heidi and Colleen were selected along with 8 other therapists to participate in a private screening of 8 selected USA athletes to demonstrate how PTs impact the care of individuals with intellectual disabilities for our Vice President, Joe Biden. It was an incredible experience! They had a great deal of one-on-one time with the athletes and Joe Biden. He spent at least 15-20 minutes with their group. Tim Shriver, the board chairman of the Special Olympics and Joe Biden spoke regarding the great importance of this movement. Vice President Biden also announced Kareem Dale, as the special assistant to the president for disabilities policy.

The following is a newspaper article that discusses Joe Biden's visit. Many of the quotes are from the speech Joe Biden made during the screening venue.

Biden praises Special Olympics athletes

By REBECCA BOONE
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

BOISE, Idaho -- Vice President Joe Biden says that President Barack Obama is committed to programs designed to improve the livelihood of Americans with disabilities and special needs. To demonstrate his point, Biden announced that Kareem Dale, a former member of Obama's campaign in charge of coordinating the vote of disabled Americans, has been named the special assistant to the president for disabilities policy. Biden made the announcement to a small group of Special Olympics athletes, volunteers and coordinators Thursday afternoon. The vice president was in Boise to attend a portion of the Special Olympics World Winter Games with a presidential delegation including U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan and Olympic figure-skating medalists Scott Hamilton and Michelle Kwan. "This is a civil rights movement," Biden said. "There's a need to have changes in policy." "The nation needs policy changes that will ensure Americans with disabilities can get and keep fulfilling jobs without worrying about losing government-funded health insurance or other assistance, Biden said. Advocates have long complained that programs like Social Security Disability Insurance, Supplemental Security Income, Medicaid and Medicare essentially force

disabled workers to leave their jobs or prevent them from working so that they can qualify for the medical care they need. Tim Shriver, board chairman of the Special Olympics and son of Special Olympics founder Eunice Kennedy Shriver, told Biden that he believed the games "represent the largest movement for tolerance in the world." Mockery, bullying and the institutionalization of people with disabilities still exist in America and around the globe, Shriver said, making it important for the Obama administration to set an example of support. "When this campaign hit the world stage, we felt that finally someone was speaking our language," Shriver said.

"I've been involved with the Special Olympics as a U.S. senator since 1973 when a woman named Eunice Shriver grabbed me and said, 'You're involved,'" Biden said. "I didn't know then how extensive the movement is worldwide." Biden arrived in Boise in time to watch the final five contenders in the freestyle pairs skating competition, and then, with the help of Kwan, he awarded medals to the athletes before a crowd of about 2,500. "I was telling our host as we walked out, this fulfills a dream of mine: To walk out on the ice with Michelle Kwan, and a dream to see such fine athletes," Biden joked. Biden said he was honored to be at the event with 2,000 athletes from 100 countries. "What lives in the heart of every one of these young athletes - as my mother would say, lives in every heart - is the bravery, the tenacity, the grit, and determination," Biden said. "I want to tell you how proud I am to be here." Biden later visited the Special Olympics Healthy Athletes program, which provides vision and medical care to the participants as well as training sessions on how to stay fit and limber.