

*Mickey Fedor and the Special Olympics**

Mickey Fedor, Returned Peace Corps Volunteer served in Ecuador in 1978 and kicked off Special Olympics in the country with the support of Dr. Lourdes Armendáriz, a special education teacher. Mickey brought this idea from the United States, where he had participated in Special Olympics as an athlete, first he worked implementing this idea in a few schools and then later he created these large-scale Olympics.

At that time, children with special abilities in Ecuador were relegated to being at home because their guardians feared that the children could get hurt, so Mickey's idea at first was difficult to sell.

Despite the many obstacles Lourdes and Mickey faced, they received approval from the Ministry of Education and sought financial help from organizations across the country. They then looked for coaches and doctors to start with the events at the national level, a task that turned out to be challenging, but Mickey and Lourdes never lost hope. Lourdes recalls a phrase that Mickey used to say: "No, Lourdes, we can do this, and we are going to do it."

After months of hard work and preparation, the opening ceremony of the first Special Olympics took place at the Pichincha Sports Federation venue in July 1980. President Jaime Roldós and his wife Martha, were present along with other authorities as well as high school students from Quito.



Mickey (far left) and Lourdes (far right) receiving sports equipment donation from the U.S. Embassy in Quito, 1978.

Mickey's dream of integrating special athletes finally came true.

Special Olympics was only the beginning of Mickey's short but fruitful life, as he passed away at an age of 30 due to a cancer, however, his legacy remained. Cancer may have taken his sight away at age 4, However Mickey never stopped doing what he loved. He had begun to develop a training project for the blind by teaching them technical skills to be self-sufficient.

** Taken and adapted from the Magazine "40 years of Peace Corps Ecuador" of John Zorovich.*