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## **JUNIOR BLIND OLYMPICS LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD FOR ATHLETES WHO ARE BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED**

### ***Young Athletes Compete in Annual Games Hosted by Junior Blind of America and the Optimist Blind Youth Association***

(Los Angeles) – Today, hundreds of young athletes who are blind, visually impaired or multi-disabled competed in the Junior Blind Olympics, held at Junior Blind of America's campus in Los Angeles. The annual event, co-hosted by Junior Blind of America and the Optimist Blind Youth Association, features a wide range of Olympic-style games intended to give all young people, despite their visual impairment or disability, a chance to experience the thrill of competition and participate in fun, challenging and confidence-building activities. On hand to lend their support for the event were California State Senator Mark Ridley-Thomas and Los Angeles City Councilmember Bernard C. Parks.

Sponsored by CVS/pharmacy, The Raymond Group and HBO, the Junior Blind Olympics is the premier athletic event of its kind in the U.S., inviting youth who are blind or visually impaired to compete in activities that would be considered challenging even for sighted athletes. By taking part in events such as archery, rowing, shot put, rock climbing and running long jump, athletes have the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to overcome physical challenges and realize their potential to achieve full, active and independent lives.

“The Junior Blind Olympics really capture the spirit of our mission at Junior Blind of America—helping people of all ages who are blind, visually impaired or multi-disabled achieve independence,” said Miki Jordan, President and CEO of Junior Blind of America. “The games provide an extraordinary opportunity for young people with visual impairments to both challenge and inspire each other to beat the odds and reach for their goals.”

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The Junior Blind Olympics are open to all young people, ages 6 to 19, who are blind or visually impaired. This year's event included participants from different parts of the nation, including California, Arizona and Utah. The games were kicked off with an Olympic-style opening ceremony with a parade of athletes led by the USC Trojan Marching Band. To close the day, all of the athletes received medals of participation and the winners of each event were recognized at a closing award ceremony with gold, silver and bronze medals.

"Seeing the joy and determination on the faces of our athletes as they compete and push their physical abilities is truly inspirational," said Dara Laski, President of the Optimist Blind Youth Association. "Their success shows what these children who have sight barriers can accomplish when given the resources and opportunities. They are all winners."

### **About Junior Blind of America**

For more than 50 years, Junior Blind of America has been an innovative leader in helping people of all ages who are blind, visually impaired or multi-disabled achieve independence. Each year, Junior Blind of America provides services to thousands of individuals and their families through programs that offer individualized methods of early-intervention therapy, education, rehabilitation and recreation. These life-changing programs are designed to empower infants, childrens, teens and adults to reach their highest level of independence and self-esteem. To learn more, please visit [www.juniorblind.org](http://www.juniorblind.org).

### **About Optimist Blind Youth Association**

The Optimist Blind Youth Association (OBYA) was established to help generate funding and support for the Junior Blind Olympics. In co-hosting with Junior Blind of America, OBYA is responsible for travel arrangements and housing for out-of-town athletes. The Optimist Blind Youth Association is a branch of Optimist International, an association consisting of dedicated Optimist Club members throughout the Pacific Southwest, Pacific Southeast and California South Districts.

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