

Dear Friends,

Congratulations! 1 million people have today woken up to a brighter morning – thanks to the support of people like you!

Yes! Special Olympics Bharat is now a family of over 1 million athletes – gearing up to create a better world for themselves!

The 1 million mark is not just a milestone for all of us at Special Olympics Bharat, but also an inspiration -- to keep working for the children with special needs; Inspiration to reach out to the rest of 29 million intellectually disabled children; And an inspiration to not give up.

As our Chairman Tim Shriver puts it, it feels like “We won the Lottery today!... And we have won more than any financial prize could hope to deliver: we won faith in the human spirit”. Do read Tim’s letter below.

Regards,

Denzil Keelor

PS: I am truly humbled by the words. Also, Akshay Kumar, Filmstar and Brand Ambassador Special Olympics Bharat tweeted this : <http://bit.ly/YdohCg>

We won the lottery!!!

Tim Shriver

We won the Lottery today!

Jealous? Don't be. Here's our story.

Ten years ago, a couple of friends and I bought a lottery ticket that advertised a 1 million jackpot. We knew the chances weren't great that we'd win, but we decided to buy anyway. Everyone has that feeling once in a while: “What the heck! You never know what might happen so let's take a chance.” We bought our ticket from a guy named Denzil Keelor. I think we bought it because he looked like a winner. It might seem crazy but we thought that if the salesman was a winner, then maybe he'd make us winners too.

So you can imagine our surprise when we woke up this morning to find out that our ticket won. We won! The promised 1 million is ours. It may have seemed impossible and it was surely unlikely. But sometimes, when you imagine something to be possible, it comes true. That man Keelor who sold us that ticket over a decade ago turned out to be everything we'd hoped he'd be.

The first question everyone asks when you win the lottery is, “What are you going to do with your winnings?”

The answer requires an explanation.

We didn't win our 1 million in dollars so we don't have to worry about paying taxes. We didn't win it in Euros either so we don't have to worry about currency exchanges either. And we didn't win it in Rupees either even though we won it in India.

We won it in human capital. You see, today, the people of Special Olympics in India announced that they had achieved the unthinkable goal of bringing ONE MILLION ATHLETES into the community we call Special Olympics. That's right: Special Olympics in India has one million athletes participating right now. They've joined to play sports like football and cricket and athletics. They've joined to learn leadership and self-advocacy skills. They've joined to teach lessons about acceptance and human diversity in schools around their great nation. They've joined to give their families a community of support and empowerment. They've joined by the thousands in Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra and West Bengal and in villages and towns all over the subcontinent. They've made history.

Each one of *them* is a win for all of *us*.

That's not winning the lottery you say? Think again. Building human capital is the most difficult thing in the world to do. When the community of contributing citizens expands, we each win the most difficult thing in the world to win: a place of belonging. When those who have been excluded are finally welcomed, we each learn the most difficult lesson to learn: that everyone counts. When athletes and families and volunteers join to create the Special Olympics community, we each find the joy that doesn't fade: joy in generosity; joy in unity. And when millions of people leave the closets of shame and the dark rooms of despair to train and play and compete, we each win the most exhilarating of prizes: active bodies, strong and healthy lives.

Those of us around the world in Special Olympics took a bet a decade ago. It was a bet on the Chairman of Special Olympics Bharat, Denzil Keelor. It was a bet on the world's largest democracy, India. Most of all, it was a bet on the human spirit. Together, we pledged to do anything in our power to enable the people of India to become leaders in the world of acceptance and health and sport and joy.

Today, we won more than any financial prize could hope to deliver: We won faith in the human spirit.

Thanks to everyone in Special Olympics Bharat. All over the world, you made it possible for us all to feel like we won the lottery. Let the celebrations begin!!