



Joanna Julius

Athlete – F
Age: 27 / Kadazan - SO Sabah

Sport - Athletics

Event 1 – 100m Female Category C
Event 2 – Long Jump Female Category C
Event 3 = Team Relay 4 x 100m (2nd runner)



SPECIAL OLYMPICS
WORLD GAMES
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Joanna Julius was a healthy and vibrant baby at birth and enjoyed attending kindergarten, playing with her peers and showing no signs of being different. However, upon starting primary school, Joanna struggled to grasp the academic basics and was unable to read, write or do numbers. As a result, she became increasingly isolated, quiet and unhappy in school, and was subject to bullying. Her mother noticed these changes in Joanna but was unable to identify the cause.

One day, Annie (Joanna's mum) received a call from the school informing her that Joanna had suffered a seizure and had fallen. Upon taking her to the hospital for a full diagnosis, Joanna was diagnosed as being on the autism spectrum and exhibiting signs of ADHD, in addition to being identified as a slow learner.

Annie started searching for a suitable school to place Joanna in and found a Special Needs school in Kota Kinabalu when Joanna started Standard 2. Joanna joined Special Olympics Sabah when she was 9, showcasing her athletic ability through sports such as Athletics, Bocce, and Bowling and impressing her peers and teachers, who nicknamed her "Puteri" the Princess of sports. Through sports training, Joanna found her joy again, making Annie very proud and happy.

Eventually, Joanna participated in the 100m and 200m Snowshoeing events at Special Olympics World Winter Games Pyeong Chang 2013. That was Joanna's first international level competition.



"Family support gives me strength and confidence on the journey of helping Joanna to be successful. Through the Special Olympics Family Support Network (FSN), I'm able to connect with other families and learn from their experiences," says Annie. Since 2013, Annie is actively involved in volunteering at FSN. She has been appointed to lead FSN in the local program and she is grateful for the opportunity to learn and help other parents in FSN. She also took the lead in developing FSN in another area in Sabah.

Currently, the Special Olympics Family Support Network is running in Kota Kinabalu, Kudat, Tawau, Sandakan and Lahad Datu. FSN brings families together in a caring, positive way and makes the cheers for our athletes even louder. Families build communities by volunteering, sharing information, involving in global network, and serving in leadership roles. It truly makes a difference for every family involved in the Special Olympics Movement. Annie shows a good example of how far a parent can be involved in the Special Olympics Movement and change a life. In 2019, Annie was appointed secretary of SO Sabah. She is a member of Special Olympics Malaysia Family Support Network, and she is also appointed to Special Olympics Asia Pacific Family Input Council. It has been a long fruitful journey for Annie.