

August 15, 1989

Nancy Loucks
Area Director
Texas Special Olympics
3311 Richmond Avenue, Suite 230
Houston, Texas 77098

Dear Ms. Loucks:

As a parent and physician, I am writing to express my dismay that the Special Olympics has seen fit to permit its name and image of inspiration to become associated with the promotion of alcohol.

I am hard-pressed to think of a more shallow and shameless gimmick than the Miller Lite Beer party "to benefit the Special Olympics of Texas". For nearly a year, actor Randy Quaid has appeared on television commercials, sometimes with a beer in hand, at other times surrounded by children-participants of the Special Olympics, to tout "the biggest party in history".

Needless to say, no mention is made in these hippest of commercials of the devastating impact of alcohol on the youth of Texas and on the nation as a whole, much less such conditions as fetal alcohol syndrome and paraplegia due to alcohol-related motor vehicle injuries.

Such sponsorship of the Special Olympics would be akin to the South African government boasting of its funding a conference on civil rights of minorities or a tobacco company publicizing a donation to the American Lung Association. Indeed, Philip Morris, the maker of Miller Lite Beer, has been able to expand its domain into alcohol and food products and increase its influence over communities largely through the profits from the sale of Marlboro and other cigarette brands. As the number one American advertiser of cigarettes and the number two promoter of beer, Philip Morris bears a major responsibility for the ongoing holocaust of alcohol and tobacco related deaths and diseases in this country.

I understand that the incongruity of an alcohol promoter sponsoring the Special Olympics did concern certain local board members of the Special Olympics, but that the deal was cut at the state level. The money, it seems -- \$1 million, I am told -- was just too much to pass up, regardless of the source. This shameless decision makes a mockery of efforts by a number of health organizations to counteract alcohol problems and the promotion of alcohol to the next generation.