

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY TO HOST SPECIAL OLYMPICS PENNSYLVANIA'S 31ST ANNUAL FALL FESTIVAL, NOV. 1 – 3

Weekend Features Torch Run, Philadelphia Eagles' Alex Singleton, Coach Jay Wright, and Unified Basketball Exhibition between Special Olympics Athletes and the Villanova Wildcats

(Norristown, PA, October 23, 2019) – Special Olympics Pennsylvania's Fall Festival returns to Villanova University for the 31st consecutive year from November 1-3, 2019, and will welcome approximately 1,200 coaches, athletes and Unified Partners representing 43 Pennsylvania county programs. Participants will compete in bocce, long distance running/walking, powerlifting, roller skating, soccer, and volleyball. Villanova's campus, located at 800 E. Lancaster Avenue, will take athletes to new heights with a campus-wide theme that celebrates athlete achievements as Special Olympics Pennsylvania (SOPA) kicks off its year-long 50th Anniversary celebration with a focus on inclusion. Events will take place on Villanova's campus, Marple Sports Arena and The Agnes Irwin School. In addition, the weekend will feature a Law Enforcement Torch Run, Unified Basketball Exhibition, Young Athletes and Healthy Athletes® programs, an "Olympic Town," a Victory Dance and Closing Ceremonies.

Fall Festival is regarded as the largest university student-run Special Olympics event in the world led by Villanova University's Special Olympics Committee. The University also donates all of its facilities and serves as the event's principle volunteer base under the leadership of this year's director Gabrielle Grieco, who heads a 98-person student committee.

"Special Olympics Pennsylvania is grateful for the long standing partnership that we have had with Villanova University in planning, organizing and hosting our Fall Festival," said Gina Reid, Senior Field Director for Special Olympics Pennsylvania. "Our athletes look forward to this event all year. The energy and excitement generated by the students and staff at Villanova is unmatched. From the moment our athletes step foot on campus they are welcomed, embraced and celebrated as champions. The student committee and the Villanova community truly create a magical experience for our athletes."

The full weekend begins with the excitement of the [Unified Fall Festival Torch Run](#), a 26 mile non-competitive run consisting of 18 segments from XFINITY Live! Philadelphia to Villanova University on November 1st. Hundreds of runners representing law enforcement officers, athletes, elected officials, schools and businesses will participate. The Run begins at 9:30 a.m. and concludes its journey to campus at approximately 3 p.m.

Opening Ceremonies will start at 7:30 p.m. and be held in the new William B. Finneran Pavilion located at 1530 County Line Rd in Bryn Mawr, PA. The ceremony will feature Villanova University Head Men's Basketball Coach Jay Wright and include a special 20-minute Unified Exhibition between the Villanova Wildcats and Special Olympics basketball athletes. The game will begin at approximate 8:05 p.m. and end at 8:30 p.m. with a 5-minute halftime Dunk Show in between. Additional live entertainment and special invited guests include Philadelphia Eagles linebacker and SOPA's newest Celebrity Ambassador, Alex Singleton; the Villanova Cheerleaders; and the State Street Miracles, a performance troupe of adults with intellectual disabilities. Opening Ceremonies will conclude with the lighting of the Olympic Torch to signify the official start of the Games.

Athletes will begin preliminary competitions in all six sports on November 1st. Roller skating competitions will take place at the Marple Sports Arena, 611 South Park Way in Broomall, PA. On Saturday and Sunday,

Special Olympics Pennsylvania

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Soccer 7v7 and Volleyball Champion competitions will be held at The Agnes Irwin School, 275 S Ithan Ave, Bryn Mawr, PA; and all other competitions and activities will take place at Villanova University.

The weekend will also offer Healthy Habits interactive education stations; Healthy Athletes® non-invasive clinical screenings; Young Athletes activities; an “Olympic Town” providing athlete activities in-between sporting events; a Victory Dance; and Closing Ceremonies. Closing Ceremonies will be held in the Jake Nevin Field House on November 3rd at 1:00pm. [Click here](#) to view a complete Fall Festival schedule of events.

More than 6,000 volunteers from the Villanova student body and the surrounding community are expected to participate in the event this year, serving in numerous capacities including as officials, athlete escorts, award presenters, and administrative support services. Volunteers from across the state are welcome and spectators are encouraged to visit any of the competition venues on or near campus to cheer on the athletes. For more information about volunteering, visit www.specialolympicspa.org.

The 2019 Fall Festival major event sponsors include Premier State-wide partner Sheetz, Inc.; Presenting Sponsor TD Bank; Aerotek; Energy Transfer; Harmelin Media; Grand Council R & S Master Masons; Philadelphia Insurance Companies; Kessler, Topaz, Meltzer + Check; De Lage Landen, Delaware County Daily Times; Law Enforcement Torch Run; David & Marjorie D. Rosenberg Foundation; Wawa; Knights of Columbus.

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About Special Olympics Pennsylvania

Special Olympics Pennsylvania provides year-round training and competition in 21 Olympic-type sports to more than 20,000 children and adults with intellectual disabilities or closely related developmental disabilities. For more information about how you can join “The Inclusion Revolution,” visit www.specialolympicspa.org.

About Villanova University

Since 1842, Villanova University’s Augustinian Catholic intellectual tradition has been the cornerstone of an academic community in which students learn to think critically, act compassionately and succeed while serving others. There are more than 10,000 undergraduate, graduate and law students in the University’s six colleges – the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the Villanova School of Business, the College of Engineering, the College of Nursing the Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law, and The College of Professional Studies. [Click here](#) for more information on Villanova University.

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