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Lebanon Student-Athlete Awards Special Olympics PA – Allegheny County Gatorade Play It Forward Grant

Norristown, PA (April 15, 2020) — Pennsylvania Cross Country Gatorade State Player of the Year and Mt. Lebanon native, Patrick Anderson, recently awarded Special Olympics Pennsylvania – Allegheny County with a \$1,000 grant to help accomplish its mission of providing free year-round sports training and competition to the nearly 1,400 athletes that the local program serves.

Sports have seen a double-digit decline over the past decade, largely due to tighter budgets in communities, but young people that participate in sports are found to be happier, healthier and better students. Gatorade Play It Forward empowers Gatorade Player of the Year recipients across the country to award local or national sports organizations with grants, so they can continue helping young athletes enjoy the benefit of sports.

“The Gatorade Player of the Year award highlights student-athletes who set an example both on and off the field,” said Amanda Turak, Assistant Marketing Manager for Gatorade Player of the Year. “The grants give these athletes a chance to donate to organizations like, Special Olympics Pennsylvania – Allegheny County, that positively impact the youth in their own communities.”

Anderson chose to award the grant to Special Olympics Allegheny County in honor of his aunt, Erin Gannon, who has been an active athlete in the local program for over 30 years. Gannon also currently assumes Athlete Leadership roles within the program as Global Messenger and Athlete Leadership Team member. Anderson’s grandfather (Gannon’s father), was also instrumental in helping to establish the local program’s golf program.

“We are very grateful to Patrick for selecting us to be the beneficiary of the \$1,000 grant from Gatorade’s Play It Forward program,” said Kathy Guy, Special Olympics Allegheny County’s Program Director. “We have decided to keep the spirit behind the inspiration for his donation and use the grant to support our golf and swimming programs, which are the two sports that have been Erin’s passion.”

All 607 Gatorade State Player of the Year recipients are awarded a grant to donate to the organization of their choosing. Each Player of the Year can also submit an essay about why their organization is deserving of a Spotlight Grant, which is a larger monetary award. Gatorade awards 12 Spotlight Grants, one for each sport recognized by the Player of the Year program.

To keep up to date on the latest happenings, become a fan of Gatorade Player of the Year on Facebook and follow the conversation on Twitter #GatoradePOY. For more on Gatorade Play It Forward, the Gatorade Player of the Year, including nomination information, a complete list of past winners and the announcement of the Gatorade National Player of the Year, visit PlayerOfTheYear.Gatorade.com

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About Gatorade Player of the Year

The Gatorade Player of the Year is an athletic award program that annually recognizes student-athletes not only for outstanding athletic excellence, but also high standards of academic achievement and exemplary character in 12 different sports: football, boys and girls basketball, baseball, boys and girls soccer, softball, boys and girls track & field, girls volleyball and boys and girls cross country. The Gatorade Player of the Year

award is the most prestigious award in high school sports. In existence for more than 30 years, past winners include Peyton Manning, Abby Wambach, Karl-Anthony Towns, Derek Jeter and many other sports icons.

Play It Forward is Gatorade's cause marketing platform, which empowers every one of the Gatorade Player of the Year award winners to choose a local or national youth sport organization to receive a \$1,000 grant from Gatorade. Gatorade State Players of the Year then have the opportunity to submit an essay explaining why the organization they chose is deserving of one of twelve Spotlight Grants, which awards \$10,000 to the organization.

About Special Olympics Pennsylvania

Special Olympics Pennsylvania (SOPA) 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 50 years, SOPA and its 54 local programs have used the power of sports to transform the lives of people with intellectual disabilities and unite everyone by fostering community and building a more acceptable and civil society. SOPA is much more than a sports organization. Through its Athlete Leadership Programs, athletes assume meaningful leadership roles, influence change within the Special Olympics movement and take on roles as Global Messengers (trained as public speakers for Special Olympics), athlete representatives, coaches, board members and more. SOPA also addresses major challenges facing its athletes including healthcare. Its Healthy Athletes program offers athletes free health screenings in the form of eye, ear, dental and podiatry assessments. Athletes are also taught how to live active lifestyles, eat healthy and more. Additionally, SOPA strives to create a unified world by promoting inclusion, uniting communities, and changing attitude. Through Unified Sports, SOPA brings together individuals with and without intellectual disabilities as equal teammates in training and competition, which promotes respect and acceptance, and facilitates meaningful relationships between people of all abilities. For more information about how you can join "The Inclusion Revolution," visit www.specialolympicspa.org