

Fall 2017

SOAR: Special Olympics Athlete Review

Special Olympics
Pennsylvania



Becoming a Well Rounded Leader

Kristine Progin, Lebanon County Athlete Leader



My name is Kristine Progin. I'm 42 years old and I've been a Special Olympics athlete for over 30 years!

In the last 3 months I've graduated from Athlete Leadership University as an Athlete Representative, became a Global Messenger, found out that I now qualify as a certified coach & took Athletes as Coaches at Athlete Leadership University to help me better my role. Oh and I almost forgot, I also took time to conduct Athlete Input Surveys at both the Eastern Fall Sectional and also at Fall Festival. I've wanted to be a Global Messenger for quite some time, now I'm achieving that and a whole lot more that I never thought possible through Special Olympics.

I believe that once you graduate from Athlete Leadership University there are plenty more opportunities out there to learn achieve and conquer. As Athlete Leaders, it is important to spread the word about Special Olympics because we know firsthand how it has changed and shape our lives to become stronger individuals in life. Special Olympics gives athletes the courage, strength & power to succeed.

Athlete Leadership University may not be for every athlete, however if curious about it an athlete could always attend a local Athlete Leadership Team meeting or an Athlete Input Council meeting at a state games. There are always Athlete Leaders there that you can talk to and express your interests. The more you get involved with Athlete Leadership at the Local Level, the more opportunities you will have to pursue the same great opportunities I have been able to.

Kristine Progin is an Athlete Representative, Global Messenger and Certified Coach from Lebanon County. Kristine has been participating in Special Olympics for over 30 years and was one of 21 athletes to be part of the Athlete Leadership University Class of 2017.

Helping Athletes Achieve Their Personal Bests

Heather Thomas, Blair County Health and Fitness Coordinator



Hello, my name Heather Thomas. I am an athlete and Health and Fitness Coordinator from Blair County. For those of you that don't know what a Health and Fitness Coordinator is, it's an Athlete Leader committed to helping their fellow athletes develop a healthy lifestyle inside and outside of Special Olympics.

One of the goals within the Special Olympics Pennsylvania Strategic Plan is helping athletes improve their performance to compete at their very best. This past Summer Games was a big success for me as a competitor and leader.

As a Health and Fitness Coordinator I strive to encourage many of my fellow athletes to live healthy more active lifestyle. One of my fellow Tennis teammates, Marita Foor, really took this to heart and started to write down the days she did activity in a month which was almost every day.

At Summer Games it was the last day of our competition. We ended up playing each other for the bronze medal and she won. I was disappointed of course because I lost but she really deserved it. She did all of that physical activity so and it paid off for her in the end. I helped out someone who needed that extra fitness push! I was proud of her and felt like I was actually doing good work in our county because I helped someone with their fitness. Even though I lost, in the end, both of us won.

Heather Thomas is a Health and Fitness Coordinator from Blair County and has been participating in Special Olympics for 14 years. Heather is currently one of 33 Health and Fitness Coordinators throughout the state and was a member of the Pennsylvania delegation during the 2006 and 2014 USA Games.

New Event Means New Opportunities

Jordan Schubert, Athlete Leadership Coordinator



It was Wednesday, June 5th 2013. My parents had just picked me up from the train station after I returned home following starting an internship in Washington, DC. I was tired and I had three longer days to prepare for. A month before, my basketball team barely qualified for Summer Games as we were the last of the bronze medal winners drawn following the Eastern Spring Sectional. It had been over two years since I had competed at the State Level in any sport for Special Olympics and I didn't know what to expect at Special Olympics Pennsylvania's Summer Games. After a long day of prelims and sitting around, it was time for Opening Ceremonies. As soon as I walked into Medlar Field and heard over 3,000 people all excited, it was like nothing I had ever seen before. Even though my team lost two tough games and we had to settle for bronze, I thought nothing could ever match the awesomeness I had experienced at my very first Summer Games asides from maybe the USA or World Games. On March 2nd, 2019 though, that will all change.

A few years back, Special Olympics Pennsylvania had spent a lot of time researching and developing ideas on creating a new multi-sport State Competition that would allow athletes the opportunity to compete in more sports throughout the year. After sitting on the back burner for a while, it was finally brought back into discussion. After a lot of hard work, this new event, the Indoor Winter Games, will become a reality in 2019.

The Indoor Winter Games will consist of four sports: figure skating, speed skating, bowling and my winter time sport, floor hockey. By having these sports in one event, it will allow athletes to be able to do the following:

- Athletes that compete in alpine skiing, cross country skiing or snowshoeing at Winter Games can now compete in figure or speed skating and vice versa.
- Athletes that compete in bowling can now try to qualify for Summer Games in another sport and even more athletes can now try to qualify for bowling at the Indoor Winter Games.

While the Indoor Winter Games won't change anything about the sports I compete in, it will give floor hockey a bigger presence at the State Level. Floor Hockey, as well as other major events like Opening Ceremonies, Olympic Village, Healthy Athletes, etc. will all take place at the York Expo Center. While I've only seen pictures, the York Expo Center looks like it can hold more spectators at the floor hockey venues and will be an ideal location for extracurricular activities once athletes

are finished with competition. With the bowling and skating venues being within close proximity of the Expo Center, this will allow all athletes a chance to get a taste of everything the Indoor Winter Games will have to offer.

Another great thing about this event being in York is that it's not too far from the State Capitol in Harrisburg. This will allow Government officials a chance to take part in the event and learn how they can best support Special Olympics Pennsylvania at all levels. Harrisburg is also Pennsylvania's third largest media market, which will increase the publicity of the event and lead to more volunteers, sponsors and Fans in the Stands.

What I'm really looking forward to though is being a part of the greater Montgomery County delegation. Many of you know that I live in and play basketball in Chester County. Chester County does not have a floor hockey program, so two years ago, I decided to join Montgomery County's program because it is close to my office and I already had developed great relationships with some of the athletes and coaches. Not only have they welcomed me in as an outsider, they have also welcomed in athletes from Bucks and Philadelphia. By going from a single to a multi-sport event, I'll be able to make even more friends in the Montgomery County area.

The Indoor Winter Games were not created because Special Olympics Pennsylvania's Staff and Board thought it would be a good idea. Ok, that's part of the reason. The real reason though is because this is what we, the athletes want. For the first time in over 14 years of participating in Special Olympics, I'll get to be part of an inaugural event. On March 2nd, 2019, my hope is that each athlete gets to feel exactly what I felt the first time I attended Summer Games. Even though the first Indoor Winter Games is still over a year away, it's never too early to share your ideas on how Special Olympics Pennsylvania can make this event something athletes, coaches and family members can look forward to each year for several years to come.

Jordan Schubert is the Athlete Leadership Coordinator for Special Olympics Pennsylvania and is an athlete in Chester and Montgomery County. Jordan has been participating in Special Olympics for 14 years and graduated from West Chester University in 2015.

2017 Summer Games/Fall Festival Athlete Input Survey & Athlete Input Council Results

New Grading System: As a way to help Special Olympics Pennsylvania staff and the Games Organizing Committee better understand how to improve each event, Athlete Input Survey responses are now graded using a formula that best interprets overall athlete satisfaction.

How it Works: Percentage of answers selected as "Excellent"/"Better" plus one half percentage of answers selected as "Average"/"Same) divided by X (X=Total # of graded questions) = Overall Grade

Example: 80% Excellent + 20% Average ÷ 2= 90% (A-)

2017 Summer Games 138 Surveys Completed Overall Grade: 82% (B-)

1. What sport did you compete in?

- **Aquatics-27 (19%)**
- Athletics-23 (17%)
- Basketball 5 v 5-16 (12%)
- Basketball 3 v 3-18 (13%)
- Basketball Skills-2 (1%)
- Bowling-12 (9%)
- Equestrian-3 (2%)
- Golf-12 (9%)
- Golf Skills-1 (1%)
- Gymnastics-6 (4%)
- Softball-9 (7%)
- Softball Skills-2 (1%)
- Tennis-6 (4%)
- Tennis Skills-1 (1%)

2. First Time vs. Returning Athlete:

- First Time-15 (11%)
- **Returning- 123 (89%)**

3. Comparison to previous Summer Games:

- 65% Better + 25% Same ÷ 2=**78% (C+)**
 - i. 10% answered "Needs Improvement"

4. Overall quality of competition:

- 83% Excellent + 14% Average ÷ 2=**90% (A-)**
 - i. 3% answered "Poor"

5. Food and beverages:

- 63% Excellent + 27% Average ÷ 2=**77% (C)**
 - i. 10% answered "Poor"

6. Opening Ceremonies:

- 73% Excellent + 17% Average ÷ 2=**82% (B-)**
 - i. 10% answered "Poor"

7. Olympic Village:

- 73% Excellent + 23% Average ÷ 2=**85% (B)**
 - i. 4% answered "Poor"

8. Additional comments from Athlete Input Surveys:

- It was a lot of fun, can't wait until next year.

- Need to update Olympic Village.
- More coffee stations in Pollick.
- Enjoyed making molds of monuments.
- More Gluten Free food.
- Add fireworks to Opening Ceremonies.
- Cheerleaders at sports fest.
- Better organized when checking into dorms.
- Have PSU bookstore run a booth at Olympic Village
- Have dance inside.
- Competition was great (Basketball 3 v 3).
- Make Opening Ceremonies earlier.
- Everyone was nice.
- Not enough volunteers at tennis.
- Better explanation of the schedule (Equestrian).
- Need more volunteers at our venue (Basketball Skills).
- Have more extracurricular activities at aquatics venue.
- Have rolling awards for basketball 5 v 5 in lobby of IM Building.
- Have parade of athletes continue into Opening Ceremonies by having flag bearers march around the warning track while their county is being called.

2017 Summer Games Athlete Input Council Results

60 Athletes Attended

1. Did you have any delays in your competition schedule and if so, what were the causes and how could they have been prevented?

- Buses were late (Softball and Athletics).
- Officials did not show up on time (Basketball 5 v 5).
- Scoring cards weren't signed by officials (Golf).
- Event was delayed due to athletes not showing up on time (Athletics).

2. Were there enough healthy food and beverage choices at meals?

- More gluten free options.
- Oatmeal was too moist.
- Too many plates.
- More fruit.
- Serve more pasta.
- Didn't like the coffee.
- Didn't like hamburgers, serve chicken sandwiches as a 2nd choice.
- More beverage options at President's Reception.
- Not enough salad.
- More yogurt choices

3. What would you like to add/change for next year's Opening Ceremonies and/or extracurricular activities?

- Could not find a good seat at stadium, too far to see/hear.
- Have karaoke at Olympic Village.
- Standing too long during Parade of Athletes.
- York County did not have a banner.
- Have planes fly over during National Anthem.
- Have athlete sing National Anthem.

4. What additional comments or concerns do you have about Summer Games?

- Directions were not clear as to where to park/load.
- Had to grab onto bars and sides in showers in Hartwood Hall.
- Aquatics volunteers refused help, which caused events to run slower.
- Have Olympic Town open longer.
- Tent at athletics needs to be moved because coaches can't see.

2017 Fall Festival 131 Surveys Completed Overall Grade: 79% (C+)

1. What sport did you compete in?

- Bocce: 7 (5%)
- LDR/LDW: 28 (21%)
- Power Lifting: 12 (9%)
- Roller Skating Artistic: 2 (2%)
- Roller Skating Speed: 5 (4%)
- Soccer 5 v 5: 8 (6%)
- Soccer 7 v 7: 16 (12%)
- Soccer 11 v 11: 7 (5%)
- **Volleyball: 44 (36%)**
- Volleyball Skills: 2 (2%)

2. First Time vs. Returning Athlete:

- First Time: 18 (14%)
- **Returning: 113 (86%)**

3. Comparison to previous Fall Festivals:

- 49% Better + 46% Same ÷ 2 = **72% (C-)**
 - 5% answered "Needs Improvement"

4. Overall quality of competition:

- 65% Excellent + 36% Average ÷ 2 = **83% (B)**
 - i. 1% answered "Poor"

5. Food and beverages:

- 65% Excellent + 36% Average ÷ 2 = **83% (B)**
 - i. 1% answered "Poor"

6. Opening Ceremonies:

- 47% Excellent + 33% Average ÷ 2 = **64% (D-)**
 - i. 24% answered "Poor"

7. Olympic Village:

- 81% Excellent + 19% Average ÷ 2 = 91% (A-)

Additional Comments:

- More things to do on Friday.
- Course was different (LDR/LDW).
- Like the scoreboard (Volleyball).
- Refs allowing too much physical play leading to injuries (Soccer 11 v 11).
- Tired of playing the same teams every year (Volleyball).
- Not enough food options on Friday.
- Need more diabetic friendly options.
- Enjoyed the live stream of Opening Ceremonies.

- Keep Dance in Jake Nevin.
- Shuttle service was great.
- Competition was slow (Power Lifting).
- Healthy Athletes was awesome.
- Students are awesome.

2017 Fall Festival Athlete Input Council Results

35 Athletes Attended

- 1. Were there any delays in your competition schedule?**
 - LDR/LDW Awards took 2 hours.
 - All other competition ran smoothly.
- 2. Were there enough healthy food and beverage options at meals?**
 - Donahue needs better selection for those that are vegetarian/vegan.
- 3. Is there anything you would like to add/change for Opening Ceremonies and/or other extracurricular activities?**
 - Find an indoor location to be the first choice if the Pavilion is unavailable.
- 4. Do you have any other questions, comments and/or concerns about Fall Festival?**
 - Shuttle busses should be handicap accessible.
 - Upload highlights from Opening Ceremonies and Competition on YouTube.
 - Better instructions for buses leaving the dance.
 - Stream more competition on Facebook live.

Thanks to all the athletes that attend the Athlete Input Councils and completed Athlete Input Surveys at Summer Games and Fall Festival! If you're unable to attend an Athlete Input Council or complete an Athlete Input Survey at any State or Sectional Competition, but have questions, ideas or concerns to share, please contact Senior Competition Director, Gina Reid at greid@specialolympicspa.org.

Athlete Recognition

SOAR would like to congratulate the following athletes on the following major accomplishments:

- **Athlete Leadership University Class of 2017:**
 - Ashley Bressler, Columbia/Montour, Global Messenger.
 - Christina Cybulak, Bradford/Sullivan, Athlete Representative.
 - Donhelen Hodges, Area M, Global Messenger.
 - Daniel Kolb, Chester, Athlete Representative and Global Messenger.
 - Nicole Lindsley, Area P, Global Messenger.
 - Christa Mereen, Bedford, Global Messenger.
 - Jeffery Mican, Area P, Athlete as Coach.
 - Gail Morning, Bucks, Athlete as Coach.
 - Mary Nigro, Mercer, Athlete Representative.
 - Chloe Phillips, Lancaster, Global Messenger.
 - Elizabeth Porter, Bradford/Sullivan, Global Messenger.
 - Kristine Progin, Lebanon, Athlete Representative.
 - Noah Reinhart, York, Global Messenger
 - Amanda Reiss, Bethlehem, Global Messenger and Athlete as Coach.
 - Bobbi Jo Rhen, Lebanon, Athlete Representative.

- Ernest Roundtree, Monroe, Athlete Representative and Global Messenger.
 - Michael Silvis, Athlete Representative, Global Messenger and Athlete as Coach.
 - Timothy Spence, Butler, Athlete Representative and Global Messenger.
 - Roger Turner, Lycoming, Global Messenger.
 - Kelly Unangst, Delaware, Athlete Representative.
 - Zachary Williams, Fayette, Global Messenger.
- **Male and Female Athlete of the Year:**
 - Jeff Parkinson, Northumberland/Snyder, Male.
 - Bobbi Jo Rhen, Lebanon, Female.
- **Special Olympics Pennsylvania Hall of Fame Class of 2017:**
 - Andrew Mayer, Washington.
 - Amanda Reiss, Bethlehem.

2018 USA Games Team PA Final Roster



Congratulations to all of the athletes, unified partners and coaches selected as members of Team PA attending the 2018 USA Games in Seattle, WA!

Meet all the members of Team PA via this link:

<http://specialolympicspa.org/sports-competitions/competitions/usa-games>

All members of Team PA will be recognized during Opening Ceremonies of the 2018 Summer Games!

Important Notices

Jordan Schubert, Athlete Leadership Coordinator

Athlete Leadership University Update:

Tentative 2018 Athlete Leadership University Schedule:

- Athlete Representative I* and Global Messenger I:
 - Spring, 2018 in Central, PA.
- Athletes as Coaches and Healthy Lifestyles:
 - Summer, 2018 in Western, PA.
- Athlete Representative II and Global Messenger II:
 - Fall, 2018 in Eastern, PA.

*If you are interested in attending the 2018 Athlete Congress, **YOU MUST** take Athlete Representative I.

Athlete Leadership Team Reminder:

All Athlete Leadership Teams (ALTs) are required to submit their minutes to me following each meeting. Minutes can be sent via:

- E-mail: jshubert@specialolympicspa.org
OR
- Mail: Attn: Jordan Schubert, 2570 Blvd. of the Generals Suite 124, Norristown, PA 19403
OR
- Fax: Attn : Jordan Schubert, 610-630-9456

Athlete Leadership Facebook Group:

Are you on Facebook and want to communicate more with your fellow athletes? Send a friend request to Jelsea Schrob (a combined name for myself, Jordan Schubert and Director of Programming Projects, Chelsea Drob) to be added to SOPA's Athlete Leadership Facebook group. This group is a great way to interact with athletes, as well as receive the most up to date Athlete Leadership information. If you're not on Facebook, creating an account is quick, easy and free!

Email Address Update: I would like to be able to reach as many athletes as possible. If you haven't received any emails from me, or your email address has changed in the last year, please email me at jshubert@specialolympicspa.org.

Share Your Story: If you would like to share a story on Fall Festival, Polar Plunges or any other Special Olympics experiences, please e-mail me at jshubert@specialolympicspa.org by January 31st for a chance to have your story shared in the End of 2017 Edition of SOAR.