



## 2018 USA Games Torch Run Experience

Ernie Roundtree, Regional Input Council Chair



My experience doing the final leg of the Torch Run for the 2018 USA Games in Seattle was amazing! The first day of trip was getting used to the time difference and getting to know my Law Enforcement team in Spokane, Washington for the night. On June 27<sup>th</sup>, it was time to go to ceremonies in each town. I spoke at one of the ceremonies and it was an amazing experience! We ran back to the bus and went

to the next location, which was in Seattle. After we were done at Leavenworth, Washington busses were split in 2 routes.

I also got to speak at the Joint base in McChord, Washington where they presented me a plaque. On the 29<sup>th</sup>, I got back on the bus, but this time, both routes were running together to the Space Needle. We ran from Space Needle, to the police boat at the Seattle dock and ran to Brookes HQ for ceremonies. My favorite part of the day was going to the fun store which we all got a voucher to buy one bubblehead. The next night, another team captain invited me to join them to see the Seattle Mariners game.

On June 30<sup>th</sup>, we ran from Safeco Field to Starbucks HQ and did our ceremonies. We then got to go to Centurylink Field to be a part of a pre-game ceremony for the Seattle Sounders. We then had ceremony rehearsal where they were deciding which officer and athlete will be bringing in the torch at Husky Stadium. I was then so excited when I heard I was selected to bring in the torch along with Team 3 officer from Ohio to opening ceremonies. We both were speechless in fact I still get emotional that my dream came true.

*Ernie Roundtree is an Athlete Representative and Global Messenger from Monroe County and has been participating in Special Olympics for 18 years. Ernie was elected as the third Chair of the Regional Input Council and Athlete Selected Board Seat during the 2018 Athlete Congress and was one of 3 PA athletes nominated for the next International Global Messenger class.*

## ***Putting Greene County in the Spotlight***

John Ferguson, Greene County Global Messenger



My name is John Ferguson. I am a Global Messenger from Greene County. I started with Special Olympics over 20 years ago. Not too long ago, Greene County was without a Special Olympics program due to not having enough athletes and volunteers. The reason I wanted to be a Global Messenger is because I really like meeting new people and telling everyone how great Special Olympics is and help grow Special Olympics in Greene County. When my county manager approached me about being a Global Messenger, I jumped at it. Last year I went to Penn State for my first training. I learned so much. My instructors were so nice. If I didn't understand something, they were right there to explain and help.

I got the opportunity to be the co-emcee at Opening Ceremonies at the Western Spring Sectional at Carnegie Mellon. Just when I thought that was amazing, it got even better as I was chosen as the keynote speaker for Opening Ceremonies at Penn State for Summer Games! I thought I would get nervous but I was able to relax and enjoy it. I met some really nice people, including Sue Paterno. To help Greene County grow, as a Global Messenger, I plan to going into the schools and some businesses to get new athletes and volunteers and share the mission of Special Olympics throughout the community.

*John Ferguson is a Global Messenger from Greene County and has been participating in Special Olympics for 20 years. John is very proud of the 50 medals he has won during that time and is very passionate about physical fitness.*

## ***My Special Olympics Story***

Carole Ann Bollinger, Adams County Athlete



Hi my name is Carole Ann Bollinger and I am an athlete from Adams County. Special Olympics has played a major role in my life and I'm excited to share my story with you. I first became a Special Olympics Athlete in 2012, when I lived back in North Carolina. During that time, I played two sports: bowling and athletics. I got first place in those two sports down in North Carolina. Three years later, I moved to Pennsylvania to be near my family. When I arrived in Pennsylvania, I joined the Adams County Special Olympics program and loved it from the very start.

Since moving to Adams County, I have become even more involved in Special Olympics. I'm competing in roller skating, basketball, volleyball, kayaking, tennis, floor hockey and bowling. I hope to get back to doing athletics next year. Special Olympics has changed my whole life completely. I have made so many friends, including my very first boyfriend. I have set so many goals for me to achieve in Special Olympics, which include getting the opportunity to compete at the USA and World Games for basketball, bowling or athletics. I actually almost accomplished that goal last year. My basketball team was the first alternate drawn for the 2018 USA Games, right behind the eventual National Champion Area M Lakers! I would like to spread the word about Special Olympics to get more people to volunteer or to donate to their local Special Olympics program to help make a difference in every Special Olympic athlete's lives.

*Carole Ann Bollinger is an athlete from Adams County and has been participating in Special Olympics for 6 years in North Carolina and Pennsylvania.*

## ***We're All One Team***

Jordan Schubert, Athlete Leadership Coordinator



Put yourself in my shoes for a second. It's the gold medal basketball game at Summer Games in the IM Building. You're battling back and forth with a team that blew you out of the water the day before. You then grab a rebound on your teammate's missed free throw, tie the game with less than a minute remaining, only to then lose by one point shortly after. Not only do you not win gold, you and your team also finish one point short of having the opportunity to be drawn among the other gold medal winners for the shot of getting selected to the 2018 USA Games. Now, imagine having those thoughts run through your mind almost every day for a year. Not so easy, is it? For the longest time, I never thought I would get over that loss. However, sometimes the best way to forget about a difficult defeat is to play another game. That all started back in March, when my basketball team, the Blue Streaks, arrived at Gettysburg College for our first tournament of the year. One of the biggest lessons I've learned while playing basketball in Special Olympics is that you can only control two things: your attitude and the sneakers you put on. After I slipped on my shoes, I looked at myself in the mirror in the locker room after putting my uniform on. I then realized that in order to be successful in any sport, you can't just believe in your own abilities. You also have to trust those around you. In our first game, after I missed an easy layup on our first possession, I then got a steal on the other end and zipped down the floor. I immediately forgot about what happened not even 10 seconds ago, and got my teams' first points of the season. Throughout the rest of that game and the other game we played, my teammates and I played some of the most unselfish basketball we have ever played.

Back on the first Saturday of April, my team was supposed to compete at the Delaware County invitational at Widener University. However, it got postponed due to the threat of snow. Gina Reid, Special Olympics Pennsylvania's Senior Competition Director, then asked if I wanted to scrimmage against the Area M Lakers, the basketball team that got selected, during Team PA training camp, which was at a YMCA five minutes from my house. I was hesitant at first, but then I did agree to attend. I realized that if you want others to support you during your big moments, you should always support them too. Plus, I really didn't have any other plans that day because of the DelCo invitational. When my buddy Eugene, one of the Lakers, saw me arrive, he asked if I was there to watch them. I then smiled and said, "No, I'm here to whip you guys into shape". In truth, taking part in that scrimmage actually helped whip me into shape. The first two hours were warm ups and half-court drills. The last hour was then a full court 5 v 5 scrimmage between the Lakers and myself teamed with some local high school and college students. In the three total hours, I participated in every drill and the full scrimmage. When I got home, I could barely walk. To make matters more complicated, I had another tournament the next day! One of my teammates actually asked me if I hurt my ankle after seeing a picture of me icing my foot on Instagram. Fortunately, I felt a lot better in the morning and following the last game, I said to my dad that I felt like I could play another game. He thought I was joking, but I really wasn't. Some kind of fire inside me ignited that I hadn't felt in years.

Heading into the Eastern Spring Sectional, we only had two tournaments under our belt and neither of them had the teams we ended up playing. We also only had eight players going in. In our first game against the Lancaster Hoopsters, I thought it was going to be easy since we've beaten them several times before. That was not the case. During that game, my shot wasn't falling, so I started feeding the hot hands and focusing on preventing any easy looks on defense. In the second game against the DelCo Cavaliers, it was a real physical start. After being down 4-2 at the half, my shot finally started falling and we wound up winning our second game 12-6. Finally, we punched our ticket to Summer Games by beating the Montgomery Knights to win the gold.

By no means were we done. A week later, not only was it the re-scheduled DelCo invitational on Saturday, it was also the Area M Spring Thing on Sunday (yes, that's what they actually call it!). At Widener, we rode the momentum from the previous week and won four games against some really good teams. When I got home, I reached into the freezer to grab some ice, only to realize, I didn't need it. Surprisingly, the next morning, I woke up with even more energy. We then won three more games, one of which was against (you guessed it) the Lakers! Not only was I thrilled that we won our

fourth gold medal of the season, but we had developed a team chemistry equivalent to the 93 Phillies. We goofed around a lot during downtime, but we all came together and worked as a team to win. Of course, unlike the 93 Phillies, we wanted to make sure we finished this story on a winning note.

Ever since I first came to Penn State, Summer Games has always been my favorite state competition both here in PA and when I lived in Illinois. As soon as I walked into the IM Building though, I started to remember the heartbreak from not just last year, but also the year before. I then remembered that skill means nothing if you're not in the most positive mindset, so I took a deep breath and got ready for the tournament. We won our first game against the DelCo Cavilers in the same physical fashion we beat them at Kutztown. We then beat the Westmoreland Wolverines as well. Our toughest matchup though came in the first game on Saturday morning, when we played against the Montgomery Mayhem. Some of those guys and girls are part of my floor hockey team, which is also called the Mayhem. Throughout the first three quarters, it was really tight. We only scored four points in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half, but that was all that was needed to seal that win up and advance to the gold medal round for another matchup against the Cavs.

Just like our game at Kutztown and the day before, it wasn't easy one bit. One area of my game I pride myself on more than anything is my ability to get it to the big guys on inbounds plays under the basket. When my shot wasn't falling, that got my team going. Shortly after, I finally got a couple shots to fall. As soon as I heard the final air horn, even though I've done it six other times, something about this championship felt extra special.

When you do the right thing, more good things will follow. Attending Team PA training camp not only helped me physically, but it also helped boost my own confidence to become a better player and better teammate on my own team. Better yet, my participation at training camp and our game in May might have also benefitted the Lakers. After losing their first two games in Seattle, they came back and won the gold against Northern California, who really gave them a run for their money.

Even if I never make it to USA Games as an athlete, it means just as much knowing that my team beat the eventual National Champions and I developed great relationships with many of their athletes. There's also no opposing coach I respect more than their Head Coach, Clyde North. If I lived in Area M territory, I certainly would love to play for him.

Competing at USA Games is an opportunity very few athletes get to be selected for in their lifetime. At the same time, I'm very fortunate to be in a position that even fewer athletes have the ability to pursue. As much as it would mean to me to get to compete at USA and World Games, it would be a greater victory for me to be one of the reasons why every Special Olympics program around the world has an athlete working for them full time and making the next 50 years of Special Olympics even better for you, me and every athlete. At the end of the day, we're all part of the same team.

*Jordan Schubert is the Athlete Leadership Coordinator for Special Olympics Pennsylvania and has been participating in Special Olympics for 14 years in Pennsylvania and Illinois. Jordan was also selected as a 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Global Messenger for Special Olympics International and is a proud graduate of West Chester University.*

## ***2018 Athlete Congress Recap***



A big congratulations and thank you to all of the Athlete Representatives that attended the 2018 Athlete Congress! In May, 2018, athletes were asked to vote for which Goal and Strategy within the Special Olympics Pennsylvania Strategic Plan could be improved the most. As a result of receiving the popular vote, the 2018 Athlete Congress Priority was enhancing athlete opportunities to achieve their best and improve sports programming.

Athlete Representatives were broken into two breakout groups, where they were asked to provide feedback on the topics of: Coaching, Fit 5/Personal Bests and Health and Fitness Coordinators. Following the breakout group discussions, the Athlete Congress Chair called for a vote and an overwhelming majority of Athlete Representatives voted in favor of submitting the feedback shared with the appropriate Special Olympics Pennsylvania staff.

The 2018 Athlete Congress was chaired by Michael Silvis from Adams County, and was supported by the Regional Input Council and Athlete Selected Board Seat:

- Zachary Williams, Southwest Representative from Fayette County
- Mary Nigro, Northwest Representative from Mercer County
- Roger Turner, North Central Representative from Lycoming County
- Michael Stephens, South Central Representative from Blair County
- Nina Kaneriya, Northeast Representative from Columbia/Montour Counties
- Lisa Barbour, Southeast Representative from Philadelphia County
- Melissa Woerner, Regional Input Council Chair and Athlete Selected Board Seat from Bucks County

During the 2018 Athlete Congress, four Athlete Representatives were elected into positions of office:

- Michael Silvis, South Central Representative from Adams County
- Ashley Bressler, Northeast Representative from Columbia/Montour Counties
- Kristine Progin, 2020 Athlete Congress Chair from Lebanon County
- Ernest Roundtree, Regional Input Council Chair and Athlete Selected Board Seat from Monroe County

## **2018 Summer Games Athlete Input Survey and Athlete Input Council Results**

Grading System: Percentage of answers selected as "Excellent" plus one half percentage of answers selected as "Average" divided by X (Total # of graded questions) = Grade  
Example: 80% Excellent + 20% Average ÷ 2 = 90%

**161 Surveys completed and approximately 50 athletes attended Athlete Input Council  
Overall Grade: 83% (B)**

### **Survey Breakdown by Sport:**

- Athletics-24 (15%)
- Basketball 5 v 5-27 (17%)
- Basketball 3 v 3-27 (17%)
- Basketball Skills-3 (2%)
- Bowling-15 (9%)
- Equestrian-2 (1%)
- Golf-1 (1%)
- Gymnastics-8 (5%)
- Softball-7 (4%)
- **Swimming-42 (26%)**
- Tennis-4 (2%)
- Tennis Skills-1 (1%)

### **First Time vs. Returning Athlete:**

- First Time-22 (14%)
- **Returning-139 (86%)**

#### **• Event experience compared to previous years: 67% Better + 22% Same ÷ 2 = 78% (C+)**

1. 15 athletes answered Needs Improvement:
  - a. Olympic Village was too far away from the track.
  - b. Competition wasn't well organized (Swimming).
  - c. Opening Ceremonies outside at Spikes stadium is better than Pegula.
  - d. People at info booths did not know bus schedule.
  - e. Too long a line for meals.
  - f. The shuttle did not stop by our venue (Basketball 3 v 3).
  - g. Football players weren't at Opening Ceremonies.
  - h. Need to have water coolers by the benches for Basketball 5 v 5.

#### **• Overall quality of competition: 78% Excellent + 21% Average ÷ 2 = 89% (B+)**

1. 2 athletes answered Poor:
  - a. Need to have rolling awards for Basketball 5 v 5.

#### **• Quality of food and beverages provided: 59% Excellent + 31% Average ÷ 2 = 75% (C)**

1. 16 Athletes answered Poor:
  - a. Food was too cold.
  - b. Have separate plates for vegetables.
  - c. Instead of posting false signage, place visuals by soda machines on how much sugar each drink has and risk factors of consuming soft drinks before exercising.
  - d. More fruit options.
  - e. More gluten free options.

#### **• Opening Ceremonies: 78% Excellent + 19% Average ÷ 2 = 88% (B+)**

1. 3 athletes answered Poor.
  - a. Need to alternate between Medlar and Pegula each year to keep those that prefer outdoor ceremonies satisfied. Not that this is a bad thing, but the indoor ceremonies is too similar to Fall Fest.

- b. Entertainment was great.
- c. Provide earplugs while indoors/advise coaches to inform their athletes that are noise sensitive.

- **Olympic Village: 75% Excellent + 20% Average ÷ 2 = 85% (B)**

- 1. 6 athletes answered Poor.
- 2. 29 athletes did not attend Olympic Village.
  - a. We only got to go on Thursday and there wasn't much set up.
  - b. Sheetz was not there on Saturday.
  - c. Have Olympic Village activities at the dance.

**Additional Comments:**

- I love Summer Games.
- All dorms need to be air conditioned or have a fan in them.
- The dance was great.
- Looking forward to next year.
- Have food vendors come to each competition venue to allow spectators and families to buy lunch on site. Also another option for athletes that don't like cafeteria food.
- Need more cheerleaders.
- I would like to sing the National Anthem at Opening Ceremonies (Armstrong/Indiana athlete).
- Have Healthy Athletes Clinical Directors conduct screenings at competition venues.
- Water needs to be provided at all venues.
- Give different athletes a chance to carry in the flame of hope with law enforcement.
- Basketball 5 v 5 did not have enough volunteers to work the score table.
- Enjoyed the turkey dinner, made it feel like Thanksgiving with my SOPA family.
- Have PSU athletes escort SOPA athletes into Opening Ceremonies.
- More athletes to take part in torch run between Pittsburgh and State College.
- More extreme activities in Olympic Village

*Thanks to all the athletes that attended the Athlete Input Council and completed an Athlete Input Survey at Summer Games. Athlete Input Councils take place at all State Competitions and Athlete Input Surveys are conducted at all Sectional and State Competitions. If you are unable to attend an Athlete Input Council or complete an Athlete Input Survey, please share your event feedback with Senior Competition Director, Gina Reid at [greid@specialolympicspa.org](mailto:greid@specialolympicspa.org).*

## ***Athlete Recognition***

SOAR would like to recognize the following athletes on their recent accomplishments:

### **Athlete Leadership University Class of 2018:**

- Raymond Anderson, Athlete Representative, Philadelphia
- Tarre Apreala, Athlete Representative and Global Messenger, Lehigh
- John Campbell, Athlete Representative, Delaware
- Winnie Downey, Global Messenger, Delaware
- Donald Haffelfinger, Global Messenger, Delaware
- Jennifer Hellein, Athlete Representative, Armstrong/Indiana
- Timothy Hellein, Athlete Representative, Armstrong/Indiana
- Travis Jones, Global Messenger, Lawrence
- Marylin Leonhart, Athlete Representative, Crawford
- Colt List, Athlete Representative, Lawrence
- Michael Plappert, Healthy Lifestyles, York
- Kristine Progin, Athlete as Coach, Lebanon
- Brittany Thayer, Healthy Lifestyles, Bethlehem
- Zachary Williams, Athlete Representative, Fayette

### **2018 Leadership Conference Awards:**

- **Female Athlete of the Year:** Brooke Corby, Lehigh
- **Male Athlete of the Year:** Brandon Krekeler, Bethlehem
- **Athlete Leader of the Year:** Brittany Thayer, Bethlehem



## ***Team PA Recognition***

Congratulations to the following athletes on their accomplishments during the 2018 USA Games in Seattle, WA:

### **Athletics:**

- Eleazar DelaCruz, Monroe: Bronze and three ribbons.
- Nina Kaneriya, Columbia/Montour: Gold and two ribbons.
- Jonathan Kuchinskis, Monroe: Two golds and one silver.
- Christa Mereen, Bedford: Bronze and two ribbons.
- Kimberly Schickley, Columbia/Montour: Silver, bronze and two ribbons.
- Jeremy Sensening, Warren: Silver, bronze and two ribbons.
- Ashley Valentin, Monroe: Gold and three ribbons.

### **Basketball:**

- Area M Lakers, Gold:
  - Tasha Bretz
  - Jamey Carst
  - Eugene Ferreira
  - Matthew Mausner
  - Timothy McConnell
  - Adaira McNaughton
  - Christopher Nichols
  - Ethan North
  - Dena Russ
  - Gary Williams

### **Bocce:**

- Jill Byers, Lawrence: Silver and ribbon.
- Doug Jacobs, Area P: Silver.
- Nathan Jacobs, Area P: Silver and ribbon.
- Andrea Snider, Lawrence: Gold and silver.

### **Bowling:**

- Team: Ribbon
- Individual:
  - Patrick Connor, Chester: Silver and bronze.
  - Michael Pacitti, Chester: Silver and ribbon.
  - Joey Ranck, Area M: Bronze and ribbon.
  - Isadora Silk, Allegheny: Bronze and ribbon.

### **Golf:**

- Jennifer Laudeman, York: Silver.
- Jonathan Martin, York: Silver.
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### **Gymnastics:**

- Hannah Gremo, Montgomery: Three silver, one bronze and one ribbon.

**Powerlifting:**

- Cameron Dittmar, Bucks: Four silvers.
- Joni Talavera, Bethlehem: Silver and three bronze.

**Unified Soccer:**

- Chester Chargers, Silver:
  - Chase Darlington
  - Monica Harmon
  - Celine Heffron Pero
  - Jason Heigel-Yates
  - Marko Hubbell
  - Erik Mazurkiewicz
  - Herbie Rider
  - Lisa Robinson
  - Rita Schfield
  - Bobby Seeger
  - Kristine Stout
  - Laura Waite

**Swimming:**

- Tyler Mickle, Lehigh: Silver and three ribbons.
- Elizabeth Porter, Bradford/Sullivan: Silver, bronze and two ribbons.
- Adam Smith, Area M: Silver, bronze and one ribbon.
- Elizabeth Smith, Delaware: Silver, bronze and two ribbons.
- Abby Menko, Northumberland/Snyder: Four silvers.
- Lydia Wert, Beaver: Two golds and two silvers.
- Andrew Yeske, Bucks: Gold and two silvers.

**Tennis:**

- David Miller, Adams: Bronze.

**SOAR would like to also give a special thanks to all Team PA Coaches and Staff for all their work in helping all 50 members of the delegation excel at the National Level:**

- Athletics:
  - Tom Delaney, Bucks
  - Taryn Mockus, Area M
- Basketball:
  - Clyde North, Area M
  - Shannon Pechart, Area M
  - Eddie Wright, Area M
- Bocce:
  - Cynthia Walther, Bucks
- Bowling:
  - Jeff Turxell, Allegheny
- Golf:
  - Nat Martin, York

- **Gymnastics:**
  - Katharine Wenocur, Philadelphia
- **Powerlifting:**
  - Melissa Bock, Carbon
- **Unified Soccer:**
  - Shelly Fourarce, Chester
  - Andy Fourarce, Chester
  - Pam Graham, Chester
- **Swimming:**
  - Stacy Banyas, Columbia/Montour
  - Fred Knauss, Bethlehem
- **Tennis:**
  - Sally Kinsey, Chester
- **SOPA Staff:**
  - Nick Cammarota, Social Media Updates
  - Mike Ermer, Assistant Head of Delegation
  - Gina Reid, Head of Delegation

## ***Important Notices***

Jordan Schubert, Athlete Leadership Coordinator

### **Athlete Leadership University Update:**

Registration is open for the Athlete Leadership University session taking place October 27<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> at the Lantern Lodge in Myerstown, PA. This session will be offering Athlete Representative II and Global Messenger II. Only Athlete Leaders that have taken Athlete Representative I and/or Global Messenger I and completed the required practicum are eligible to register.

Registration for the Advanced Session is only available to Athlete Leaders and Mentors that qualify. If you have taken Athlete Representative I and/or Global Messenger I and have completed the required practicum, but have not received the registration information, please e-mail me at [jschubert@specialolympicspa.org](mailto:jschubert@specialolympicspa.org).

### **Healthy Lifestyles and Athletes as Coaches Resources:**

- NEW [Health and Fitness Club Ideas](#).
- UPDATED [Athletes as Coaches Q&A](#).

### **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: [jschubert@specialolympicspa.org](mailto:jschubert@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 [jschubert@specialolympicspa.org](mailto:jschubert@specialolympicspa.org).

**Share Your Story:** If you would like to share a story on Fall Festival, USA Games or any other recent Special Olympics experiences, please e-mail me at [jschubert@specialolympicspa.org](mailto:jschubert@specialolympicspa.org) by December 31<sup>st</sup> for a chance to have your story shared in the End of 2018 edition of SOAR.