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Editorial | Special Olympians head home with medals, fond memories

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By John Rucosky
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Kevin Dunn, of Allegheny County, accepts one of three gold medals for advanced giant slalom and Super G Alpine skiing from state police Trooper David McGarvey on Tuesday, Jan. 31, 2017, at Seven Springs Mountain Resort.



John Reynolds, Kristine Stout and Jordan Reedy thrive on competition. And they enjoy the celebrations and bling that comes with winning.

Reynolds, Stout and Reedy competed in skiing on Monday and Tuesday during the Special Olympic: Pennsylvania Winter Games at Seven Springs Mountain Resort in Somerset County.

“It’s a lot of fun,” Reynolds told reporter Kelly Urban, “but you have to practice.

“I look forward to the skiing and the medals,” he said.

Stout and Reedy parroted Reynolds’ comment.

The three skiers were among the more than 300 Olympians who took part in alpine and cross-countr skiing and showshoeing. The games began Sunday with an opening ceremony and the traditional lighting of the Olympic torch. Competition wrapped up Tuesday with medals ceremonies and closing festivities.

Speed skating had been included in the Winter Games, but that event was moved to Greensburg.

Nevertheless, the athletes at Seven Springs were busy greeting old friends and making new ones.

“These games are everything to the athletes,” said Chelsea Drob, director of programming projects for Special Olympics Pennsylvania. “It’s not only about the competition, it’s an opportunity for athlete: to come together from all over the state and do what they love and celebrate what the love.”

We thank organizers and the many volunteers, such as Jacqi Knox, who work to make sure the games come off without a hitch. Knox, a senior at Rockwood Area High School, has been a Special Olympics volunteer for five years. She said it warms her heart to watch the athletes perform.

“Everyone is cheering them on,” she said “The joy of seeing them so happy makes all this worth it.”

We also salute the Special Olympians for their courage, commitment and drive to compete.

“(The games) ... brings the idea of sport into these athletes’ lives – winning sometimes, failing sometimes, then getting back up and winning again,” said Jack Kemery, who helped coach a Chest County team. **Activate Digital Access**

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Another successful and memorable winter games is in the books, and we eagerly look forward to next year's event.

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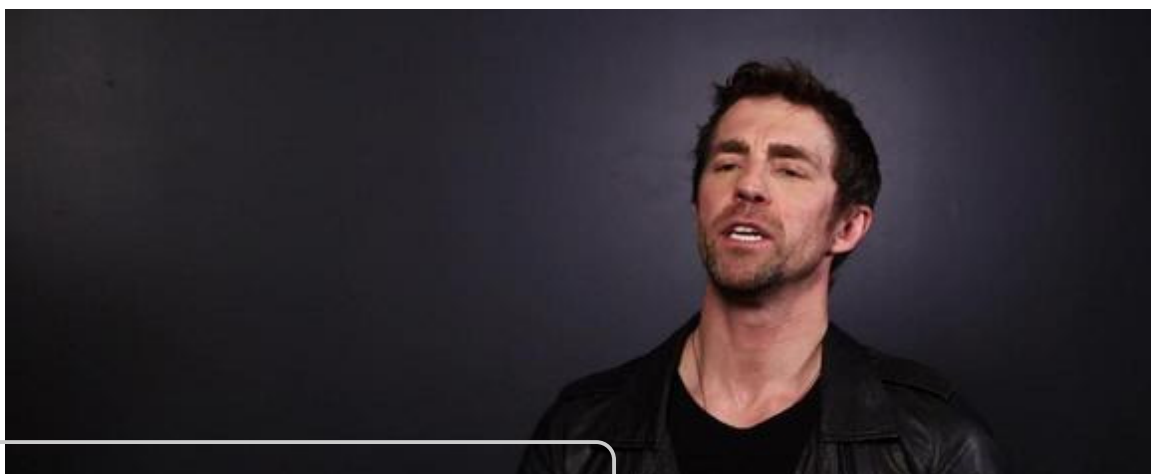
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