

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



SPECIAL OLYMPICS PA AND VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY CELEBRATE 30TH ANNUAL FALL FESTIVAL, NOV. 2 – 4

Weekend Features Torch Run, Coach Jay Wright, Unified Basketball Exhibition with the Villanova Wildcats, and Special Appearance by ESPN's Michele Steele

(Norristown, PA, October 29, 2018) – Special Olympics Pennsylvania's Fall Festival returns to Villanova University for the 30th consecutive year from November 2-4, 2018, and will welcome approximately 1,200 coaches, athletes and Unified Partners representing 40 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 represent "A Story of Bravery" with a campus-wide theme that commemorates the legacy, achievements, and courage from Special Olympics' athletes over the past 30 years. Events will take place on Villanova's campus, The Shipley School and Marple Sports Arena.

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 2nd. 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 be held in the new William B. Finneran Pavilion located at 1530 County Line Rd in Bryn Mawr, PA. The ceremony will include a special 20-minute Unified Exhibition between the Villanova Wildcats men's basketball team 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 the Villanova Cheer Spirit Line, Special Olympics International's Chief Inspiration Officer Loretta Claiborne, and ESPN Anchor Michele Steele. Opening Ceremonies will conclude with the lighting of the Olympic Torch to signify the official start of the Games.

Athletes will begin preliminary competitions on November 2nd in bocce, soccer, roller skating and volleyball. Powerlifting and long distance running competitions begin on November 3rd. Roller skating competitions will take place at the Marple Sports Arena, 611 South Park Way in Broomall, PA. Soccer 5v5 and Volleyball Team competitions will be held at The Shipley School, 814 Yarrow Street in Bryn Mawr, PA; and all other competitions and activities will take place at Villanova University.

Taking place on Saturday, November 3rd will be a 10-minute fireworks display in honor of the 30th Anniversary of Fall Festival. The firework display will be held in the heart of campus at the Kennedy Ellipse at 7:15 p.m. prior to the Athlete dance. The dance will take place at Finneran Pavilion and is open to competing athletes only. Doors open at 7 p.m. The dance will begin at 7:30 p.m. and ends at 9:30 p.m.

The weekend will also offer Healthy Athletes® non-invasive medical screenings; Young Athletes activities; an "Olympic Town" festival providing athlete activities in-between sporting events; a Victory Dance; and Closing Ceremonies. Closing Ceremonies will be held in the Finneran Pavilion on November 4th at 1 p.m. and feature appearances by Special Olympics athletes representing USA for the [2019 Special Olympics World Summer Games](#). [Click here](#) to view a complete Fall Festival schedule of events and official handbook.

Special Olympics Pennsylvania

2570 Blvd. of the Generals, Suite 124, Norristown, PA, 19403 Tel + (610) 630-9450 Toll Free + (800) 235-9058 Fax + (610) 630-9456
www.specialolympicspa.org

Created by the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation for the benefit of persons with intellectual disabilities

Fall Festival is regarded as the largest university student-run Special Olympics event in the world led by Villanova University's Special Olympics Committee that assists SOPA in the event organization. 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 Julia Berger, a student who served as Computers and Registration Assistant and Fundraising Chair in the past. Berger heads 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 Competition 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."

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 2018 Fall Festival major event sponsors include Premier State-wide partner Sheetz, Inc.; Presenting Sponsor TD Bank; Aerotek; 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; ACME Markets.

Media Contacts: **Wenona Sutton**, SOPA, 610-630-9450, ext. 219, wsutton@specialolympicspa.org
Hilary Korsen, Villanova Committee, 860-462-2727, media@villanovaspo.com

About Special Olympics Pennsylvania

Special Olympics Pennsylvania (SOPA) provides year-round training and competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports to nearly 20,000 children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, and experience joy. For more information, visit our web site at 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.

###

Special Olympics Pennsylvania

2570 Blvd. of the Generals, Suite 124, Norristown, PA, 19403 Tel + (610) 630-9450 Toll Free + (800) 235-9058 Fax + (610) 630-9456
www.specialolympicspa.org

Created by the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation for the benefit of persons with intellectual disabilities