



LOCAL YMCAS PARTNER WITH SPECIAL OLYMPICS PENNSYLVANIA

Special Olympics Pennsylvania (SOPA) and three local Y organizations today announced increased fitness and training opportunities for athletes with intellectual disabilities. Effective February 1, 2018, the partnership will link athletes to 27 YMCA facilities across the Philadelphia region; Philadelphia Freedom Valley YMCA, YMCA of Greater Brandywine and the YMCA of York and York County. Both organizations share a similar mission that works to improve the quality of life and well-being for the community.

The partnership will help alleviate the Special Olympics struggle to find suitable locations to train athletes and host local competitions. Athletes in the Special Olympic Programs will have access to dozens of Y facilities where they can train for competitive meets, improve fitness levels and build conditioning skills needed to meet the physical challenges of sports training. Athletes can also train for Olympic-type sports year round as opposed to their current 8-week sessions.

Developing healthy habits is another big challenge facing these athletes and their families. Many have limited healthcare so health issues often go untreated. With the support from the Y, athletes will have regular access to health and wellness programs, group exercise and nutritionists as well as open gym and swim time.

“One of Special Olympics Pennsylvania’s primary goals is to enhance opportunities for every athlete to achieve their best,” said Matthew Aaron, SOPA President & CEO. “This wonderful new partnership with YMCA associations will help us educate athletes and families about the importance of nutrition and a healthy lifestyle and help our athletes continuously improve their conditioning and skills.”

This collaboration will not only benefit the athletes, but the entire community which the Y serves. In addition to the training and fitness components, community activities and events will help drive the importance of developing youth across generations and diverse populations. The Y connects people from all backgrounds who want to live healthy and feel connected to something bigger than themselves. The relationship between Special Olympics and the Y opens up volunteer opportunities for both organizations and demonstrates the impact that partnerships like this can have on strengthening the community.

“YMCA’s across Pennsylvania are excited to partner with Special Olympics as we share a common mission to develop vibrant and healthy communities that are inclusive of all people,” said Larry Richardson, President of the Pennsylvania State Alliance of YMCAs. “We look forward to providing opportunities for every individual to be healthy in the communities we serve.”

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This is the first year Special Olympics Pennsylvania and these Y Associations have partnered together to increase opportunities for athletes to develop lifelong fitness goals and reach their full potential. For more information about the partnership and to find local opportunities to get involved with Special Olympics Pennsylvania and the local YMCAs, visit please visit www.specialolympicspa.org, www.philaymca.org, www.ymcagbw.org, www.yorkcoymca.org

About Special Olympics Pennsylvania

Special Olympics Pennsylvania provides year-round training and competition in 21 Olympic-type sports to nearly 20,000 children and adults with intellectual disabilities. For more information about how you can help *Reveal the Champion Inside* thousands of Special Olympics athletes, visit our web site at www.specialolympicspa.org.

About the YMCA

The Y is one of the nation's leading nonprofits organizations and is focused on strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. In the United States, 2,700 Ys engage 22 million men, women, and children – regardless of age, income, or background – to nurture the potential of children and teens, improve the nation's health and well-being, and provide opportunities to give back and support neighbors. Anchored in more than 10,000 communities, the Y has the long-standing relationships and physical presence not just to promise, but also to deliver, lasting personal and social change.

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