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Special Olympics Pennsylvania to Host Pittsburgh's First UNcathlon

Event Models Decathlon, Adds Fundraising as 11th Event

Pittsburgh, PA (March 28, 2017) – Special Olympics Pennsylvania (SOPA) will host Pittsburgh's first UNcathlon event from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday, April 9th at Schenley Park, located at 1 Overlook Drive. The UNcathlon will offer 11 events, one more than the traditional 10 found in a decathlon, and feature exercise challenges with fundraising accounting for the 11th challenge. The event will bring persons with and without intellectual disabilities together in Unified Sports to benefit nearly 20,000 Special Olympics athletes.

The UNcathlon will involve several co-ed teams of five participants plus a Special Olympics athlete. Each team will take part in 10 trials that test speed, strength and endurance. Challenge events will include pull ups, shot put, dips, the 40-yard dash, 400 meter run, 800 meter run, 20-yard shuttle run, long jump, 500 meter row, and a mystery team work round. The 11th event will be the fundraising component that participants will complete prior to the UNcathlon.

The UNcathlon was initiated by Pittsburgh resident Shannon Barry, a cancer survivor who had always dreamed of creating a national awareness fundraising campaign to bring recognition to a cause.

"During my marathon training a couple of summers ago, I mentioned to a friend of mine that I knew of a group of guys who had created a decathlon to raise funds to benefit pediatric cancer," Barry explained. "We were impressed at the uniqueness of the event and its effectiveness in raising funds. I think, simultaneously, we considered how a decathlon fundraising event could very easily be integrated into the affairs of SOPA, especially if we leverage integrated teamwork into the equation."

From those conversations, Barry and his friend created a business plan and presented it to Matt Aaron, SOPA's President and CEO, who welcomed the idea. "That was June 2016," Barry said. "Since then, the idea has really blossomed to include not just a one-day event, but a 10-week fitness and nutritional regiment."

From there, Barry invited people from his network to accompany him on this journey, and they became members of the SOPA UNcathlon Founders Council, the group accredited with launching the event and conducting the behind-the-scenes work to make the UNcathlon a success.

"We are incredibly grateful to both Shannon for the idea of creating an UNcathlon and the SOPA UNcathlon Founder's Council for all the work they have done to bring this event to fruition," said Jessica

Kury, SOPA Special Events Manager. “Through this event, we hope to increase awareness about Special Olympics, and we hope that Pittsburgh residents will embrace this challenge to form teams and participate with us on April 9th.”

The goal is to attract 20 teams to participate and to raise \$50,000 to benefit SOPA. Each team’s fundraising goal is \$2,500, with individual goals set at \$500. Team spots for the UNCathlon are almost full, and the deadline for registration is Monday, April 3rd. Participants will not be accepted day of, so please register today.

“We feel that if we can achieve these goals, we have the potential for growing the event locally and syndicating the idea across Pennsylvania,” Barry noted.

Presenting Sponsors for the UNCathlon include Aerotek and Morgan Stanley. In addition, the event’s Creative Partner is Six19, its Public Relations Partner is Healthy Fit PR, and the Training Partner is New Balance.

For more information about the event or to register a team, call Kury at 724-375-7515, ext. 244 or visit www.UNCathlon.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 Unified Sports®

Special Olympics Unified Sports® creates an opportunity for people without intellectual disabilities to join in the sports experience by playing on a team with athletes with intellectual disabilities. Not only do the players all have fun, but attitude change and transformation happens on the playing field and the experiences create lifelong friendships. Unified Sports® combines approximately equal numbers of Special Olympics Athletes and athletes without intellectual disabilities (called Partners) on sports teams for training and competition. Age and ability matching of athletes and partners is defined on a sport-by-sport basis.

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