



For Immediate Release:

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Special Olympics PA's 41st Annual Winter Games To Be Held Jan. 28-30 at Seven Springs Mountain Resort & Kirk S. Nevin Arena

Winter Games Polar Plunge to Conclude the 41st Celebration on February 3rd

(Norristown, PA, January 17, 2018) – More than 300 athletes and 135 coaches will travel to the 41st Annual Special Olympics Pennsylvania (SOPA) Winter Games held in Seven Springs and Greensburg, PA from January 28th-30th. This statewide competition, taking place at Seven Springs Mountain Resort as well as the Kirk S. Nevin Arena, will feature competitions in alpine and cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and speed skating. This year's competition will also include the third annual Unified Sports Experience featuring Special Olympics athletes (individuals with intellectual disabilities) and partners (individuals without intellectual disabilities) in a friendly snowshoeing competition prior to Opening Ceremonies for the honor of lighting the cauldron to officially open the Games.

Opening Ceremonies for the 2018 Winter Games will begin on Sunday, January 28 at 7:00 p.m. in the Seven Springs Mountain Resort Festival Plaza. Co-emceed by WTAE Channel 4's Evening Anchor Shannon Perrine and Bedford County athlete Christa Mereen, the anticipated Opening will feature an array of speakers, performances, the official lighting of the Olympic Torch by athletes and members of law enforcement, and conclude with a fireworks display.

Competition is slated to begin on Monday, January 29th and will offer a majority of events at Seven Springs Mountain Resort with the exception of speed skating that will be held at the Kirk S. Nevin Arena. Individual, relay, and team events will take place on Monday followed by competition finals on Tuesday morning. Awards and Closing Ceremonies are scheduled to take place at each venue from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. on January 30th. The complete [Winter Games event schedule](#) is available via the SOPA website, and a SOPA Winter Games mobile application is available free for download from Apple iTunes and Google Play stores.

"We are thrilled to continue our relationship with Seven Springs Mountain Resort and the Kirk S. Nevin Arena. Both venues as well as their surrounding communities continue to welcome our athletes, coaches, and volunteers with open arms," said Mike Ermer, SOPA's Western Competition Director. "The Winter Games committee has been working diligently to prepare for our 41st Annual event. Event leads Mike Suman, Sue Putman, and Bob Halden – in particular – are three members of the committee that have gone above and beyond to help get us ready for the Games."

To culminate the Winter Games' 41st annual celebration, hundreds of brave individuals will be "freezin' for a reason" during the [2018 Winter Games Polar Plunge](#) on Saturday, February 3rd. Supporters will brave the cold waters of Canoe Creek State Park Lake in Hollidaysburg, PA at 12 p.m. with the goal of bringing awareness to the Winter Games and raising funds to help benefit Western PA Special Olympics athletes year-round. The plunge is open to the public (\$50 minimum donation to participate) and all spectators are welcome free of charge. Visit www.PlungePA.org for more information.

Winter Games will also host Healthy Athletes programs where medical professionals and student volunteers offer free dental and podiatry screenings. This year, a doctor will be available on site to make insoles. In addition, health education will be provided and the International Lions Club will conduct vision screenings. Our Healthy Athletes program provides health services and education to Special Olympics athletes free of charge, and is changing the way health systems interact with people with intellectual disabilities. The program has now made Special Olympics the largest public health organization for people with intellectual disabilities in the world. [Click here](#) for more information about our health programs.

Special Olympics Pennsylvania athletes and coaches from the following city/county programs will compete: Allegheny County, Area M (Dauphin, Perry, Cumberland, and Northern York Counties), Area P (Susquehanna, Wayne, Pike, Lackawanna, Wyoming), Armstrong/Indiana Counties, Beaver County, Bethlehem City, Bucks County, Butler County, Centre County, Chester County, Erie City, Lancaster County, Lebanon County, Lehigh County, Lycoming County, Montgomery County, Northampton County, Somerset County, Washington County, Westmoreland County, York County, and athletes from the states of Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia.

More than 1,200 volunteers from the community, corporations, schools and universities will participate in the event, serving in numerous capacities including officials, athlete escorts, award presenters, and in administrative support services. Volunteers from across the state are welcome and spectators are encouraged to visit any of the competition venues to cheer on the athletes. For more information, or to volunteer, contact Mike Ermer at 1-800-233-5161 x 243 or mermer@specialolympicspa.org.

Sheetz, Inc. is the Premier Sponsor of the 2018 Winter Games. Additionally, Aerotek, GEICO, Seven Springs Mountain Resort, Sam's Club, DICK'S Sporting Goods, Acme Corrugated Box Company, Walmart, Chevron, Hidden Valley Resort, Pennsylvania Tourism Office, Pepsi, the David and Marjorie Rosenberg Foundation, the Knights of Columbus, the VWR Foundation, the Jack Buncher Family Foundation, John E. and Sue M. Jackson Charitable Trust, Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc., and the Donald B. and Dorothy L. Stabler Foundation are major sponsors of this year's event. WJAC, the Tribune Democrat, and WTAJ will serve as key Winter Games media partners.

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.