



The Tip Of The Iceberg

Howard "Tip" Hansen, Area M Global Messenger



Hi, my name is Howard Hansen, but you can call me Tippy. Back in 1992, I found out about a Special Olympics softball program taking place not too far from me. From the moment I went to my first practice, I instantly fell in love with it. As I continued improving each year, I became more confident in my abilities to lead by example and as a result, my coaches looked to me to help welcome in new athletes and assist them with different skills if they were struggling. The thing I love most about softball is that I made several friends, many of which I'm still close with today. In addition to softball, which is still my favorite sport, some of the other sports I currently or have previously participated in are volleyball, bowling, long distance running, flag football and floor hockey.

Three years after I first started participating in Special Olympics, I became a Global Messenger. Over the past 25 years, I've given countless speeches within my community and at the state level. To give a few examples of speeches I've done over the years, I spoke at Summer Games in 2000, Fall Festival in 2018, I've spoken at a few Sheetz Openings in and around Harrisburg and have emceed Opening Ceremonies with Area M's Athlete Leadership Team at our invitationals. I'll talk more about my Athlete Leadership Team involvement in a little bit; however being a Global Messenger brings me so much joy because I know I'm bringing joy to countless other people in the audience. As much as I enjoy talking about myself, I also enjoy educating my community about Special Olympics, which has allowed Area M to gain a lot of volunteers and partner with local businesses.

In 1999, I got to go to the World Games in North Carolina for softball. As happy as I was to bring home a bronze medal, I was even more thrilled just to be there and see Special Olympics at the highest level in what I thought was a once in a lifetime opportunity. However, shortly after my volleyball team won gold at Fall Fest in 2013, I found out we were selected to compete at the 2014 USA Games in New Jersey! Since these games were relatively close, Pennsylvania was able to send a delegation of over 200 athletes! After an intense battle in our final game, we wound up finishing 2nd, however just like my experience in North Carolina, I was just happy to be there and made the most of every moment because I don't know when or if I'll get an opportunity like this again.

Earlier, I mentioned I'm part of Area M's Athlete Leadership Team. Our Athlete Leadership Team meets to discuss high level issues that we think should be addressed by the Management Team. In addition to providing feedback and emceeding Opening Ceremonies at our competitions, we also assist the Management Team in planning non-sports activities such as dances and parties as a way to give back to all the athletes and coaches.

Shortly after I started participating in Special Olympics in 1992, I also got a job at McDonald's where I have been working ever since. In my 28 years working there, my co-workers and customers didn't see me as someone with a disability, rather a hard working employee. That has given me the confidence to continue working hard and now, I work as a crew trainer where just like my teammates and coaches do in sports, I have other employees look up to me so they can grow professionally in whatever work they do.

My Special Olympics experience has been nothing short of wonderful. Regardless of what sport or activity, or even at my job, I always give 110% in everything I do. None of my success would be possible though without my mom's support. I'm also thankful for the support that all my other family, friends, teammates and coaches have provided me over the years and I look forward to doing many more great things in the future!

Howard "Tip" Hansen is a Global Messenger from Area M and has been participating in Special Olympics for 28 years. Outside of Special Olympics, Tip enjoys watching the Dallas Cowboys, New York Rangers and St. Louis Cardinals as well as a variety of different movies, TV shows and listening to music.

Every Day Is A Day Of Inclusion

John Mitchell, Philadelphia County Global Messenger



My name is John Mitchell and I am from Philadelphia County. I was born with VSD or Ventricular Septal Defect, bilateral hearing loss and near-sightedness. I received my first pair of glasses when I was 15 months old. When I was 2 ½ years old, I received my first pair of hearing aids. I had 4 cardiac catheterizations done to monitor the conditions of my heart. When I was 4 years old, I had eye muscle surgery due to strabismus or wandering eye. When I was 9 years old, I had open heart surgery done at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children to fix the hole in my heart. When I was 13 years old, I was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

I was not always familiar with Special Olympics until I started going to a Day Program called Flat Iron Supports which is located in Northeast Philadelphia. One of the staff members there, who was also a coach, told me about the program. I asked her to tell them that I was interested in joining. I went home from Flat Iron one day and decided to go online to look up Special Olympics and that is where I found the Special Olympics website.

While I was browsing through the website, I was impressed by what I saw and said that I would love to take part in Special Olympics one day. While I continued to search through the Special Olympics website, I found a variety of local programs and that is where I found the link to the Special Olympics Philadelphia website. I was beyond impressed by what I saw. I kept on looking through the website at the variety of sports that they have. I have always enjoyed bowling and when I saw that Special Olympics Philadelphia County had bowling in the list of sports that they play, I immediately said "wow I have to sign up for this!"

I showed my mother the Special Olympics Philadelphia website and asked her to please sign me up as a Special Olympics Philadelphia County Athlete. In January 2014, I started bowling practice as a new Special Olympics athlete at Thunderbird Lanes Oxford Circle with Mary Ellen Ziszette and I have been doing it for 6 years now. It took some time for me to get used to bowling on 2 lanes for 3 games for practice and tournaments. I competed in Erie Lanes, Allentown for the Eastern Bowling Sectional, and the Indoor Winter Games in York, Pennsylvania.

In March 2019, I went to Athlete University for Global Messenger I so that I can grow as an athlete and as a person. I enjoyed learning how to properly prepare speeches and project my voice when it is my turn to speak. In August 2019, I started playing bocce ball in Special Olympics Philadelphia at the Cafe Michelangelo in Northeast Philadelphia and proved to have a natural talent for it. As a Global Messenger, I spoke on national television for the first time on Wawa Day 2019 which is where I met the CEO of Special Olympics Pennsylvania, Matt Aaron. I had the honor of taking a picture with Mayor Jim Kenny and my fellow Athlete Leaders Sharon Quarles and Raymond Anderson. I was interviewed in a video which is now on YouTube about my experiences working at Wawa.

I have been working at Wawa for 7 years and Di Bruno Bros for 5 years. I am a student at Community College of Philadelphia as a Behavioral Health Major to pursue a career as an advocate for the disability community so that I can create an organization that provides better education

opportunities and living arrangements for the disability community. I spoke in panels at Penn Dental and Jefferson and took part in the Dream Ride Rally. I was interviewed for an article for the Philadelphia Inquirer on my experiences working at Wawa, College, and Special Olympics. Thanks to Matt Aaron, I am a member of the Cities of Inclusion Executive Council which will help me in my future goals as an advocate. I enjoy what I do as a Global Messenger because I have always enjoyed writing ever since I was a kid.

It is great that I am able to include writing and public speaking as a Global Messenger. I have received positive feedback on what I do as a Global Messenger and I am very proud to be part of the Athlete Leadership team. I plan on going back to Athlete University to become an Athlete Representative when I have completed Global Messenger II advanced training. Eventually, I'd also like to become a bowling coach so I can share the knowledge and passion I have for the sport in the same way my coaches taught me when I first started.

John Mitchell is a Global Messenger from Philadelphia County and has been participating in Special Olympics for 6 years. Outside of Special Olympics, John enjoys singing and writing.

An Amazing First Impression

Ameer Wood, Philadelphia County Athlete

Hi my name is Ameer Ali Wood, I am a 24 year old from Philadelphia and last year was my first time ever competing in Special Olympics. I remembered when I started at Northeast High School I had special Olympics Basketball practice there. From the very first moment I stepped into the gym, I remembered I had fun with SOPA Philly staff member, Michelle Cordell and my coaches, Will Howman and Sam Walt. I enjoyed being coached by them and listening to them calling plays and doing basketball drills with my teammates.



The name of my team was the Northeast Philly All-Stars. One of my favorite 2019 moments was playing at Widener University during the Delaware County invitational. One of the teams I played against had a guy that I thought once played college basketball. On almost every possession, he was dunking over someone. After he dunked on me, I finally got through to him and

blocked him. My team still kept fighting and after a hard fought 4 quarters, we still weren't done. The game went into triple overtime and while I was exhausted at the end, I was still smiling with my teammates. After winning gold at the Eastern Spring Sectional the following month, my team played against some really good teams from Chester, Butler and Westmoreland at Summer Games. As tough as each of those games were, we still pulled through each time en-route to another gold medal!

Outside of Special Olympics, I spend a lot of time working on a variety of different strength and cardio exercises. I am also learning to drive and I have my PA drivers learning permit. Once it's safe to resume all Special Olympics activities, I hope to also be able to try as many sports as possible to accomplish even more great things. I also hope to one day be trained as a Global Messenger so that one day, I can share even more stories to inspire more people to get involved with this great organization.

Ameer Ali Wood is an athlete from Philadelphia County and began participating in Special Olympics last year. Ameer had also served as an equipment intern for Temple University's football team.

My Game Beyond The Game

Jordan Schubert, Manager of Athlete Leadership & Young Athletes



If you read SOAR on a regular basis or know me personally, then you know that my two sports are basketball and floor hockey. That means, at Summer Games and Indoor Winter Games, you'll see me focused on leading my team to victory.

I mentioned two sports and two state events. You may be asking yourself if I do anything for Outdoor Winter Games and Fall Festival. The answer to that is I don't compete but I do work the event alongside my colleagues.

What I really want to talk about is what exactly I do for events like Outdoor Winter Games and Fall Fest. For all events, regardless if I'm competing or not, my responsibilities include identifying Global Messengers to speak at Opening Ceremonies/President's Reception, giving a list of additional Global Messengers to our

Marketing team for any potential media interviews, recruiting non-competing athletes or other volunteers to conduct Athlete Input Surveys, organizing and executing an Athlete Input Council and most importantly, organizing everyone's feedback from the Athlete Input Council and Surveys to present to all the staff involved with the event.

One thing I'm very fortunate to have in my role is that I can compete at an event if I choose to as long as I manage all required tasks leading into the event and give instructions to other staff to assist me with what I need that I couldn't do myself. When I'm not competing though, I'm then expected to do all required tasks before, during and after an event.

The best part for me when I'm not competing is that I can be more accessible to other staff and volunteers at a moment's notice such as speaking with representatives from current/potential corporate partners and doing a quick interview. I also enjoy getting to attend the President's Reception, not only for the food, but to also get to know our Board Members, major donors and other special guests better and talk with them more about Athlete Leadership and Young Athletes.

Speaking of Young Athletes, I haven't talked about it in SOAR yet. I'm thinking of writing more about it for a future edition. For now, the main thing you should know about it is that it's an inclusive sport and play program for children ages 2-7 of all abilities to develop their motor skills so they're ready to compete as soon as they turn 8. At Fall Fest, a group of students called the Athlete Involvement Committee organize an exhibition for current and future Young Athletes participants and the opportunity to see other parts of the event. While the students manage organizing the activities, my role is to reach out to our current Young Athletes liaisons, as well as schools from throughout the area to recruit additional participants and even start more Young Athletes sites. During the exhibition, in addition to helping set up, I also try to talk to as many parents of the participants as possible to let them know what opportunities await their children as soon as they turn 8. What's even better actually is that athletes can start training as early as 6,

so when I hear a parent/guardian tell me that their child is 6 or 7, I'm even more ecstatic to tell them that they can start training and participate in Young Athletes at the same time!

While I try to recruit as many Athlete Input Survey conductors as possible, I still like to grab a clipboard or tablet and conduct surveys myself at venues I didn't assign to our Survey Conductors or speak with athletes that were competing or not at the venue when they were there previously. While attending events in a staff capacity, I've also learned a few things on how we can get even more survey conductors without having to factor in geography and asking athletes whether or not they're competing at an event. At last year's Fall Fest, there were a few athletes from Crawford competing in LDR/LDW on Friday, but had no other events the rest of the weekend. When their Manager asked if I could let them conduct surveys, I couldn't believe I didn't think of that before! Additionally, we had Health and Fitness Coordinators with no responsibilities on Sunday, so it allowed us to get surveys from the athletes competing at Agnes Irwin, a school just down the road from Villanova that has hundreds of other athletes competing in soccer and volleyball that we weren't able to survey before. What I learned from that is that regardless if an athlete is competing or volunteering at an event, if they finish early and have nothing else to do, then I'd like to keep them off the sidelines and start a new game.

Every year since I've been in Pennsylvania, my basketball has made it to Summer Games. While hopefully this doesn't happen, I know there may be a year that we finish on the short end of a drawing or don't even get that far at all. As much as I'd rather be at Penn State with my team, if I ever do have to go to Summer Games in a staff capacity, besides from enjoying the food at the President's Reception and having more time to get ice cream from the creamery, I'll also see it as an opportunity to learn something new about an event I had only seen from one angle.

I'm not going to say I don't appreciate the effort our staff and Games Organizing Committees put into hosting a state competition for the events that I compete at. However, when I do go to an event in a staff capacity, I'm even more appreciative of the countless hours dedicated towards making an unforgettable experience for our athletes and finding new ways we can give our current and future Athlete Leaders more meaningful opportunities on a large stage.

Jordan Schubert is the Manager of Athlete Leadership & Young Athletes for Special Olympics Pennsylvania and has been participating in Special Olympics for 16 years. Jordan is also a proud graduate of West Chester University.

2020 Winter Games Athlete Input Survey Results

156 Completed

Survey Breakdown by Sport:

- Alpine Novice-28
- Alpine Intermediate-39
- Alpine Advanced-30
- Cross Country Skiing-17
- Snowshoeing-33
- Snowboarding-9

First Time vs. Returning Athlete:

- First Time-39
- Returning-117

Grades:

- Event experience compared to previous years:
 - 56% Better + 37% Same ÷ 2= 75% (C)
 - 8 Athletes answered Needs Improvement:
 - Pizza at one of the meals
 - Too Chaotic at Opening Ceremonies
 - Weather
- Overall quality of competition:
 - 70% Excellent + 29% Average ÷ 2= 85% (B)
 - One Athlete answered Poor.
 - Weather
- Quality of food and beverages provided:
 - 66% Excellent +33% Average ÷ 2= 83% (B)
 - 18 Athletes answered Poor:
 - Serve different food each year
 - Chicken was dry, but service was great
 - Gluten Free options were better than in previous years
 - More vegetarian options
- Opening Ceremonies:
 - 84% Excellent + 13% Average ÷ 2= 91% (A-)
 - 11 Athlete answered Poor:
 - Have space available for athletes that are sensitive to loud noises.
- Olympic Village:
 - 69% Excellent + 30% Average ÷ 2= 84% (B)
 - 1 Athlete answered Poor

Overall Grade:

- **84% (B)**

Additional Comments:

- More event signage throughout the resort.
- Everything was awesome.
- Love Bingo at Olympic Village.
- Have egg whites at breakfast.
- Provide earplugs at Opening Ceremonies.
- Loved the fireworks!
- Have video games in Olympic Village.

- Stretching at Healthy Athletes.
- More Fireworks!
- Have Healthy Athletes at Olympic Village on Sunday.
- Have karaoke at dance.
- Have water available at Olympic Village.
- Have Opening Ceremonies live streamed to be shown in sensory room.
- Have water available at Cross Country/Snowshoe venue.
- Waited for an hour to go downhill (Alpine).
- Charging stations for athletes to charge their phones.
- More space in Alpine Ski Lodge.
- Did not know time of our events until last minute (Cross Country).
- Matts were slippery (Alpine Novice).
- Snowshoers did not receive their awards right away.
- Change "Participation" ribbon to "Perseverance".
- Too many blind spots on advanced alpine slopes.
- Snacks available in Alpine Ski Lodge.
- More apple juice and hot chocolate.
- How much would it cost to provide an extra meal during lunch on Monday as opposed to bringing in Sheetz hoagies?
- Dining hall needs more servers.
- More milk and water available at tables.
- More seating in dining hall.
- More tissues available for runny noses.
- Waited too long to check into hotel room.
- Train volunteers on how to better communicate with non-verbal athletes.
- Have more games at Olympic Village.
- Rolling awards (Alpine Skiing).
- Have a dance both Sunday and Monday night.

From Senior Competition Director, Bruce Bach:

I want to thank all the athletes that submitted feedback through the athlete surveys and to the athletes that attended the Athlete Input Council during the 2020 Winter Games.

Your feedback is very important to us and assists us in order to provide you with excellent competition and an incredible experience at our competitions. As a competition team, we review your feedback and will share it with our Winter Games Organizing Committee. Your valuable feedback will guide us in planning for next year's Winter Games.

Athlete Input Councils are hosted at all four State Competitions and Athlete Input Surveys are conducted at all State Competitions, Spring and Fall Sectionals. If you unable to attend the Athlete Input Council or complete an Athlete Input Survey at an event, you are always welcome to share your feedback with me at bbach@specialolympicspa.org.

Yours In Sport,
Bruce

Important Notices

Jordan Schubert, Manager of Athlete Leadership & Young Athletes

Commit To Fit:

Special Olympics Pennsylvania is beyond excited to announce the launch of our brand new Commit To Fit daily workout program. While we cannot train and hold competitions right now, that doesn't mean we can't all stay healthy and active together through the below-mentioned program. This is a great way to help everyone stay connected! Here's what to expect from our Commit To Fit workout program:

- **Daily Workout Videos:** You can follow along with us across all of our social media channels at 10:30 a.m. EST, Monday-Friday.
- **LIVE Workout Sessions:** Every Monday and Wednesday evening at 7:00 p.m. EST.
- **Collaboration with Special Guests:** Join in on the fun with our athletes, coaches, volunteers, celebrity ambassadors and SOPA staff as we all Commit To Fit together!

Commit To Fit launched on Tuesday, March 24 with the first installment of our daily exercise video series, and will continue every weekday thereafter.

You can find the daily workout videos on any of our social channels: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) and [WordPress](#). And, our LIVE workout training sessions will be broadcast every MONDAY and WEDNESDAY on our Facebook page at 7:00 p.m. EST.

We realize this is a difficult time for everyone; and, we miss hanging out and training with our SOPA family as much as anyone. So, we are hopeful that you will join us on this fitness journey so that we can all be in the best shape possible for when competition resumes!

Virtual Beaver Stadium Run:

All of us with Special Olympics Pennsylvania hope that you and everyone within your local program are remaining safe and healthy during this coronavirus pandemic. During these challenging times, we need to be unified in spirit and committed to helping each other. To that end, there is an exciting opportunity for your local program to do this through a fun and interesting way!

One of the biggest events on SOPA's calendar is the annual [Paterno Family Beaver Stadium Run](#) which is held every April. While this year's live event will not take place, it instead will continue on *virtually*.

What is the Paterno Family Beaver Stadium *virtual* run presented by the [Sheetz](#) Family?

- Athletes, volunteers, friends and families from throughout the state are invited to run or walk individually and on their own while maintaining social distancing.

- Participants choose a time and location between Sunday, April 12 through Sunday, April 19 at 11:00 am to take part in this virtual event. They can do either a 3.1 mile run or a 2 mile fun walk.
- Participants can walk, jog, use the treadmill, run outside, or participate in another fashion. People of all ages and abilities can take part!

How Do I Get Involved?

- SOPA wants this to be an opportunity for athletes to stay fit and feel connected through this event. This means that all Special Olympics athletes are able to participate for FREE. No fundraising is required.
- If any athlete (or volunteer) wants to fundraise, we are grateful for their interest and they have the opportunity to do so. All funds raised support important programming for the athletes served throughout the state. NOTE: Local Programs should create a BSR Team Page with their county name included to ensure that any revenue raised for their program will be captured for revenue share distribution.
- Athletes can register for FREE by clicking on the following link: [Paterno Family Beaver Stadium Run](#)
- Click on Register at the top of the page and then “Create a Team” for your local program. Name your team page after your program. Once it is set up, send the link for your team to athletes and volunteers, encouraging them to join.
- You will see there is a \$35 charge. This does not apply to athlete participants. When you are registering, a screen will appear which reads “Your Order.” There is a box for a Promo Code. It is important for athletes to enter the following code in this box: “Athlete.” This will remove the \$35 for athletes ONLY.
- When each participant joins your team, they will have their own page which they can use to fundraise if interested (but not required). If a general participant wants to receive a Beaver Stadium Run t-shirt, however, they are required to raise \$35 through April 19. The shirts will be mailed by May 15.

PLEASE NOTE: The first 350 athletes that register to participate in the Virtual Beaver Stadium Run will receive a FREE BSR t-shirt, so sign up fast! However, everyone is encouraged to raise the minimum amount of \$35 to receive a shirt. We are offering some [cool incentives](#) for additional funds raised.

Post run videos and photos in advance of the April 19th kickoff on our social media platforms listed below. You may be included in our Facebook livestream featuring runners and celebrity guests like Sue Paterno and Hall of Fame Steelers’ running back Franco Harris.

Please like and follow us:

- Beaver Stadium Run [Facebook Page](#)
- Beaver Stadium Run [Facebook Group](#)
- Beaver Stadium Run [Twitter Page](#)
- Beaver Stadium Run [Instagram Page](#)

Take good care, stay healthy, and we hope you are able to participate.

[Click here](#) to learn more about the Virtual Run format. If you have any questions about how your program can get involved, please contact Kraig Makohus at kmakohus@specialolympicspa.org.

If you have questions about the Beaver Stadium Run, please contact Demika Poole at dpoule@specialolympicspa.org.

Additional Athlete Engagement Ideas:

- Join me on Monday, April 27th at 7:00 PM where I'll be discussing ideas for athlete engagement.
 - Login here on your computer, tablet or smartphone: <https://zoom.us/j/841659132>
 - Additionally, call into 1-646-876-9923 and enter the access code 841-659-132

Athlete Leadership University Interest Form:

- Any athlete looking to be trained as an Athlete Leader should fill out the Athlete Leadership University [Interest Form](#).
 - This is NOT a registration form. It allows me to better know who is interested in completing which courses.
 - Registration to attend Athlete Leadership University requires approval from your Local Program Manager/Director. If you don't know who your Local Program Manager/Director is, click [here](#).

Athlete Leadership University Practicum Report Forms:

- All Athlete Leadership University Practicum Report Forms can now be filled in online!
 - [Global Messenger I](#)
 - [Global Messenger II](#)
 - [Athlete Representative I](#)
 - [Athlete Representative II](#)
 - [Healthy Lifestyles](#)
 - Athletes as Coaches does not have an online report form since it requires a signature of Head Coach or Training Coordinator.
 - Any report forms submitted by athletes that have not completed a course will not be counted (i.e. Health and Fitness Coordinators that haven't completed Healthy Lifestyles)

Graduation Eligibility Reminder:

- In order to be eligible to graduate in 2020, Athlete Leaders must have their practicums submitted by June 15th, 2020. Any submissions after June 15th and you will be eligible in 2021.

Athlete Leadership Facebook Group:

Are you on Facebook and want to communicate more with your fellow athletes? Send a friend request to Jelsea Schrob to be added to SOPA's Athlete Leadership Facebook group. This group is a great way to interact with athletes, as well as receive the most up to date Athlete Leadership information. If you're not on Facebook, creating an account is quick, easy and free!

Email Address Update: I would like to be able to reach as many athletes as possible. If you haven't received any emails from me, or your email address has changed in the last year, please email me at jschubert@specialolympicspa.org.

Share Your Story: If you would like to share a story any Special Olympics experience, please e-mail me at jschubert@specialolympicspa.org by August 31st for a chance to have your story shared in Summer, 2020 Edition of SOAR.