



## Special Olympics Pennsylvania 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Toolkit

The following materials are included to help your Program promote the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Special Olympics Pennsylvania. We will begin celebrating our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary starting at Fall Festival 2019 (Nov. 1) and culminating the celebration at Fall Festival 2020. Additionally, we are anticipating a significant celebration in May, so stay tuned for details. Below you will find a link to the Dropbox Folder which contains all sorts of useful information regarding the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, including social media icons, old photos, letterhead, etc. This document will cover the following:

- SOPA History
- Activation
- Social media sample messages
- Dropbox Folder – [Here is the link to the Dropbox folder](#). Please bookmark it for future use.
- [Special Olympics Pennsylvania website link](#)

### About Special Olympics Pennsylvania

#### Our Mission

The mission of Special Olympics PA is to provide year-round sports training and competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy, and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills, and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes, and the community.

All training and competition opportunities are provided free of charge to the athletes and their families, enabling everyone to experience the benefits of Special Olympics that extend well beyond the playing field.

Special Olympics was created by the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation. Special Olympics Pennsylvania (SOPA) is authorized and accredited by [Special Olympics Inc.](#) for the benefit of persons with intellectual disabilities.

#### Our History

The movement known worldwide as Special Olympics began simply as the idea of one extraordinary woman with a vision. Eunice Kennedy Shriver believed that people with intellectual disabilities were far more capable in sports and physical activities than many experts thought. And so, the world's largest amateur sports organization began in 1962 as a day camp in the backyard of Eunice and Sargent Shriver, with the first International Games taking place in 1968. Today, the movement thrives in more than 172 countries throughout the world.

In 1969, 187 Pennsylvania athletes traveled to Maryland to participate in the Special Olympics Mid-Atlantic Invitational. It was not until months later, however, that these athletes would have a state program to call their



own. In May 1970, the first-ever Special Olympics Pennsylvania (SOPA) competition was held when 135 brave athletes participated in a small track and field competition at West Chester University. Despite its size and scope, an official Special Olympics program came into being that day thanks to the dedication, determination and vision of event organizers and volunteer directors, Dr. Ed Norris and Hank Goodwin from West Chester's Physical Education Department. The event was funded by a grant from the Department of Special Education in Harrisburg and spurred increasing state-wide interest in Special Olympics' mission in the years that followed.

Two familiar names in SOPA lore played a role in its beginnings, including one of Pennsylvania's most acclaimed athletes, Loretta Claiborne, who participated in athletics and the late former Chairman of the Board, Al Senavitis, who served as a timer during the West Chester track and field event. Making the program's establishment particularly ceremonious, then-Governor Raymond Shafer designated May 24 - 30, 1970 as "Special Olympics Week" in Pennsylvania by marking the occasion with an official proclamation.

As the organization evolved through the 1970s, the competitions moved around the state, with various colleges serving as hosts, including Cheyney, Slippery Rock, and Edinboro Universities. In 1978, a milestone of significant note occurred with the appointment of Frank Dean as the first Executive Director of SOPA.

The organization grew rapidly through the 1980s as the staff grew, county programs were founded, and local events were held across the state. Similar growth continued through the 1990s and early 2000s leading up to current President & CEO Matthew B. Aaron taking over in November 2008. In the 11 years since, SOPA has enjoyed robust growth and is on the verge of a reorganization that will continue to draw even more athletes and volunteers to the program.

Today, Special Olympics Pennsylvania trains nearly 20,000 athletes who compete annually in 21 Olympic-type sports at over 300 local, sectional, and state level competitions.

### **For The Past 50 Years...**

For 50 years, SOPA has used the power of sports to transform the lives of people with intellectual disabilities and unite everyone by fostering community and building a more acceptable and civil society. Through what has now blossomed into [55 local programs](#) across the state, most of which are county or city-based, SOPA provides services that promote physical fitness and leadership skills development. [Athlete Leadership Programs](#) are offered to empower athletes to assume meaningful leadership roles, influence change within the Special Olympics movement, and create inclusive communities around the world. Through these programs, athletes take on roles as Global Messengers (trained as public speakers for Special Olympics), athlete representatives, coaches, board members and more.

Special Olympics also helps to address major challenges facing its athletes: obesity, healthcare and employment. Obesity is more common among individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) than in the general population. Likewise, far too often persons with ID go without medical treatment, not by their choice, but because there are very few physicians, dentists, optometrists/ophthalmologists, and podiatrists that are actually trained in treating this population.

In response to these health challenges, SOPA provides free athletic training and competition year-round in Olympic-type sports for persons with ID. With sports at the core, Special Olympics directly addresses the problem of obesity by promoting healthy, active lifestyles. In addition, SOPA's [Healthy Athletes](#) initiative, a



program offering free health screenings in the form of eye, ear, dental and podiatry assessments, is provided for athletes during select statewide Games. These screenings are conducted in fun, welcoming environments, and for some athletes, are the first time they have ever seen a doctor.

Additionally, SOPA strives to create a unified world by promoting inclusion, uniting communities, and changing attitudes. Through [Unified Sports](#), SOPA brings together individuals with and without intellectual disabilities as equal teammates in training and competition. This growing statewide program builds fully inclusive schools and communities, promotes respect and acceptance, and facilitates meaningful relationships between people of all abilities.

## About Special Olympics Pennsylvania's Hall of Fame

The organization's inaugural [Hall of Fame](#) Dinner was held in March 1996 in Philadelphia, where seven athletes and three volunteers were inducted as the inaugural class. For a full list of Hall of Fame inductees, [please visit this link](#).

In addition, to date, these are the amazing people who have been recognized by SOPA with the Al Senavitis Lifetime Achievement Award: Mary Meder (2011), V. Rev. Anthony Yazge (2012), Billy Frost Concert (2013) and Anthony J. Gillespie (2014).

## Social Media

Below are some examples of social media posts for each platform. Feel free to add your own twist on things, but in general the idea should be to help promote our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and raise awareness about this awesome opportunity to celebrate together.

Keep in mind that it's essential that you accompany all your posts with photos. That could be anything from the 50<sup>th</sup> Logo to old photos from your program's history, etc. We will also be updating the DropBox with photos from throughout our history as we obtain them, but the more local and unique to your program you can keep the photos, the better.

### 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Hashtag

The official hashtag for our year-long 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary campaign will be **#SOPA50**. This hashtag is simple, short, easy to remember, and conveys the proper message. Please feel free to use this hashtag any time you post on social media so that we can create an incredible collection of photos, videos, memories, etc. from across the state. Every time you upload a post using the hashtag, it will be archived in a searchable gallery of 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary memories for all to see.



## Social Media Logo Activation

Once we officially begin our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary campaign at Fall Fest Opening Ceremonies, we will activate our logo across all social media on **Monday, Nov. 25** at 9 a.m. That means that at that time, the main Special Olympics Pennsylvania social media accounts as well as all of the Local Program accounts will utilize the assets in the DropBox to change to your specific social media avatar, creating one unique “50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary” look and feel across all platforms. Please also find in the dropbox “50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Headers” for Facebook and Twitter and a 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary “story” for Instagram.

## Social Media Posts

### Facebook:

- Special Olympics Pennsylvania is turning 50!

Help us celebrate by sharing your favorite Special Olympics memory with us! It can be a story, a photo, a video or anything in between. Be sure to use the hashtag #SOPA50 when posting. We can't wait to see all your amazing stories!

#InclusionRevolution #SOPA50

- This year, Special Olympics Pennsylvania is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> birthday!

What began in 1970 with 135 athletes at West Chester University has blossomed into an organization that now serves more than 20,000 individuals of all ages across the state of Pennsylvania. [Please consider volunteering](#) to make a difference in the lives of our amazing athletes!

#InclusionRevolution #SOPA50

- Join Special Olympics Pennsylvania's #InclusionRevolution as we celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary! Sign the pledge today to ensure that the next 50 years are even better than the first...

<http://bit.ly/signthepledgeSOPA>

#SOPA50

### Twitter:

- This year, @SpecialOlympiPA turns 50! Help us celebrate by sharing your story of inclusion with us!  
#SOPA50 #InclusionRevolution
- What began with 135 athletes at a track competition in 1970 now serves more than 20,000 athletes across Pennsylvania. @SpecialOlympiPA is 50 and we couldn't be more excited for the future! #SOPA50 #InclusionRevolution



- Happy 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, @SpecialOlympiPA!! Help make the next 50 years of Special Olympics even better by signing up to volunteer today! #SOPA50 #InclusionRevolution  
[Insert link to volunteer: <https://specialolympicspa.org/get-involved/become-a-volunteer>]

Instagram:

- This year, @specialolympicspennsylvania is turning 50 years old! We can't believe that what began with 135 athletes at a track meet at West Chester University now serves more than 20,000 athletes across 55 local programs. Join in the celebration by posting a photo of your favorite Special Olympics Pennsylvania memory and use the hashtag #SOPA50.

#InclusionRevolution

- This year, @specialolympicspennsylvania turns 50 and we want you to help us celebrate. Visit [insert your county's website/contact info here] for more information about how to get involved! #SOPA50 #InclusionRevolution