



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NORTHUMBERLAND/SNYDER ATHLETES HONORED BY  
SPECIAL OLYMPICS PENNSYLVANIA AT LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE**

(Norristown, PA, August 29, 2019) – Special Olympics Pennsylvania (SOPA) recently honored two Northumberland/Snyder County athletes during its Leadership Conference Banquet at the Penn Stater Hotel and Conference Center in State College, PA on Saturday, August 17, 2019. Christopher Branda was named the 2019 Male Athlete of the Year, while Amanda Swazey graduated from Athlete Leadership University with a degree as a Global Messenger.

Last year, ahead of Fall Festival at Villanova University, names had to be randomly selected to determine who from Northumberland/Snyder would attend to compete in powerlifting. Ultimately, Branda’s name was chosen, but he was distraught that one of his teammates who “lives for powerlifting” wasn’t selected. So Branda gave his spot to his teammate and still came to the competition to cheer him on.

A five-sport athlete (bowling, golf, floor hockey, powerlifting and softball) and Global Messenger, Branda constantly works to recruit athletes, volunteers and Unified partners within his community and participates in as many local fundraisers as possible.

“Chris is an excellent leader for the other athletes in our program. With all of his involvement and positive attitude, he leads by example every day,” said Northumberland/Snyder volunteer Jocelyn Schlegel.

For Swazey, who graduated as a Global Messenger, pursuing a degree through Athlete Leadership University is the same as pursuing one at any other university. Following the completion of numerous practicums and advanced coursework, the athlete is eligible to receive their diploma.

This program empowers athletes to become leaders in their local community, engaging in public speaking roles at local events, educating teammates about the importance of a healthy lifestyle and relaying important information from their local programs to the state office and beyond.

**About The SOPA Leadership Awards**

SOPA Leadership Award recipients were chosen by a statewide panel of business and community leaders representing both the private and nonprofit sectors. Nominations come from local Special Olympics programs throughout Pennsylvania. The event is part

of a yearly Leadership Conference designed to provide ongoing training and recognition for Special Olympics athletes and volunteers.

**About Special Olympics Pennsylvania**

Special Olympics Pennsylvania provides year-round training and competition in 21 Olympic-type sports to more than 20,000 children and adults with intellectual disabilities. For more information on how the movement inspires greatness, visit our website at [www.specialolympicspa.org](http://www.specialolympicspa.org).

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