



**Special Olympics**  
Pennsylvania



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **PITTSBURGH HIGH SCHOOLS PLACE 1<sup>ST</sup> AND 4<sup>TH</sup> IN UNIFIED FITNESS HEPTATHLON CHAMPIONSHIP DIVISIONS**

*DICK'S Sporting Goods and The DICK'S Foundation are Proud Supporters of Unified Champion Schools*

**(NORRISTOWN, PA, June 21, 2021)** – Taylor Allderdice High School finished 1<sup>st</sup> and Perry High School finished 4<sup>th</sup> in their respective divisions of the Special Olympics PA Spring Unified Fitness Heptathlon Championships. They were two of six Pittsburgh high schools that trained during the spring season, and advanced to the culminating events sponsored by DICK'S Sporting Goods.

Overall, there were three competition divisions comprised of high schools throughout the state. Trinity High School in Washington County and Roxborough High School in Philadelphia won the other two divisions.

The Unified Fitness Heptathlon took the place of the usual Unified Track and Field program normally conducted by Pittsburgh Public Schools. The delivery of instruction virtually and in-person necessitated the implementation of a new program which could adapted to a hybrid learning environment.

Created in response to the global pandemic, the Unified Fitness Heptathlon enables students with and without intellectual disabilities to virtually train in seven exercises of their choice across three disciplines (strength, agility and endurance). At the end of the season, student athletes and their teams are awarded based on their combined percentage of improvement in their chosen exercises.

Pittsburgh Public Schools and Special Olympics PA partner together to offer Unified Champion Schools (UCS) programming in all of its high schools. This consists of fully inclusive Unified Sports and youth leadership activities which bring together students with and without intellectual disabilities as equal peers. DICK'S Sporting Goods currently serve as a Southwestern Pennsylvania UCS Partner.

Recently, The DICK'S Sporting Goods Foundation announced its support of SOPA's "Cities of Inclusion" initiative by granting \$30,000 as a part of its Foundation's Sports Matter Program. The grant will be used to expand the UCS program in Pittsburgh Public Schools; and, SOPA, DICK'S Sporting Goods and The DICK'S Foundation will collaborate to create and activate programming through opportunities such as employee events, run challenges and more.

In addition to a focus on UCS programming, "Cities of Inclusion" aims to foster urban areas that value everyone and ensure people of all abilities can be involved in their communities, effectively pursue opportunities and contribute, safely express themselves, and exercise their rights. The initiative has been focused in three initial cities – Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and York – and has five areas of focus: education, healthcare, access to information and services, adequate housing and employment.

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*Created by the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation for the benefit of persons with intellectual disabilities*

“Special Olympics Pennsylvania is proud to be a pioneer in a movement for global change. Through our ‘Cities of Inclusion’ initiative, we are empowering and collaborating with local communities to ensure full inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities,” said Matt Aaron, SOPA’s President & CEO. “We are so grateful to DICK’S Sporting Goods and The DICK’S Sporting Goods Foundation for their continued and expanded support in our education focus area. To date, we have eight Unified Champion Schools in Pittsburgh that create enriching and inclusive school climates through sports and youth leadership.”

If you would like to join DICK’S Sporting Goods and The DICK’S Sporting Goods Foundation in supporting SOPA’s “Cities of Inclusion” initiative and Unified Champion Schools programs in Pittsburgh, visit [InclusionRevolutionPA.org](http://InclusionRevolutionPA.org) and donate.

### **About Special Olympics Pennsylvania**

Special Olympics Pennsylvania (SOPA) provides year-round training and competition in 21 Olympic-type sports to approximately 16,000 children and adults with intellectual disabilities or closely related developmental disabilities. For 50 years, SOPA and its 54 local programs have 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 its Athlete Leadership Programs, athletes assume meaningful leadership roles and influence change within the Special Olympics movement. SOPA also addresses major health challenges facing its athletes through its Healthy Athletes program that offers free health screenings and provides healthy lifestyle education. 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, which promotes respect and acceptance, and facilitates meaningful relationships between people of all abilities. For more information about how you can join “The Inclusion Revolution,” visit [www.specialolympicspa.org](http://www.specialolympicspa.org).

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