

Pennridge High School to Host April Showers Event & Celebrate National Recognition from Special Olympics for Inclusion Efforts

One of only 10 Schools in PA Named a National Banner Unified Champion School in 2020

WHO:

- Matt Aaron, President & CEO, Special Olympics Pennsylvania (SOPA)
- Dr. Stephen Cashman, Pennridge High School Principal
- Dr. David Bolton, Pennridge School District Superintendent
- All students who participate on the Unified Indoor Bocce and Unified Track & Field Teams; all student members of the Unified Club, staff and more.

WHAT:

National Banner Ceremony – In 2020, Penn Ridge High School was one of 10 schools in PA to receive recognition from Special Olympics by being designated a National Banner Unified Champion School. This ceremony will feature a show of school pride and spirit as the banner is unveiled.

April Showers Plunge – A safe and socially distant, in-person event adopted by schools around the state of PA. During this event, individuals who have been raising funds for SOPA athletes and their school's Unified Sports teams will walk, run, or dance their way through a shower of water provided by their local fire departments.

WHEN:

Thursday, April 29th
9:45 a.m. – National Banner Ceremony
10:00 a.m. – April Showers Event

WHERE:

Pennridge High School
1228 N 5th St, Perkasie, PA 18944

(Perkasie, PA, April 29, 2021) – Pennridge High School, a Special Olympics Pennsylvania (SOPA) Unified Champion School, will kick off its April Showers Plunge event with a special banner presentation to acknowledge the school's national recognition for providing inclusive sports and activities for students with and without intellectual disabilities. The event will take place at 9:45 a.m. on Thursday, April 29th at Pennridge High School.

The socially distant celebration will feature cheering athletes and remarks by special guests including Matt Aaron, SOPA President & CEO; Dr. Stephen Cashman, Pennridge High School Principal; Dr. David Bolton, Pennridge School District Superintendent; and Pennridge Unified Coaches, Christine Fehnel and Angela James. Festivities will commence with the [April Showers plunge event](#).

For the April Showers Plunge event, which replaced this year's Polar Plunge, the school has partnered with Perkasie Fire Department to set up water hoses for staff and students to walk, run, or dance through in support of SOPA athletes and the school's Unified Sports teams. Pennridge High School is currently one of the top fundraising teams and has raised nearly \$20,000.

Pennridge High School is one of 17 schools in Pennsylvania to receive this national honor. In 2020, Special Olympics selected 121 schools to be designated National Banner Unified Champion Schools – including ten schools from Pennsylvania.

A Special Olympics Unified Champion School has an inclusive school climate and exudes a sense of collaboration, engagement and respect for all members of the student body and staff. A Unified Champion School receiving national banner recognition is one that has demonstrated commitment to inclusion by meeting [10 national standards of excellence](#). These standards were developed by a national panel of leaders from Special Olympics and the education community. Since the program's inception in 2017 more than 500 schools nationwide have achieved national banner recognition.

The primary activities within these standards include: [Interscholastic Unified Sports®](#) (where students with and without disabilities train and compete as teammates), [Inclusive Youth Leadership](#) and [Whole-School Engagement](#). Banner Unified Champion Schools are also able to demonstrate that they are self-sustainable or have a plan in place to sustain these activities into the future

Dr. David Bolton, Pennridge School District Superintendent, stated, "Unified Sports has made a tremendous impact on our school and community. It is more than just running track or playing a competitive game of bocce; it teaches all our students the importance of getting involved and being inclusive of others in all areas of their lives."

More than 200 schools are currently participating in Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools programming in Pennsylvania, and more than 5,000 schools across the country are engaged in the program.

"Pennridge High School has joined a distinguished group of only 17 schools in Pennsylvania to receive this honor and they should feel a tremendous amount of pride whenever they see that banner. It is clear that the school has become a leader of the Unified generation – just look at how they have embraced this year's April Showers plunge event," said Matt Aaron, Special Olympics Pennsylvania President & CEO. "Pennridge High School is a shining example of what the power of creating an inclusive school climate for all members of the student body and staff can do."

The Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools model is supported by the Office of Special Education Programs at the U.S. Department of Education. More information can be found on the Special Olympics Pennsylvania website [here](#).

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ABOUT SPECIAL OLYMPICS PENNSYLVANIA

Special Olympics Pennsylvania provides year-round training and competition in 21 Olympic-type sports for 16,000 children and adults with intellectual disabilities or closely related developmental disabilities. For more information about how you can join "The Inclusion Revolution," visit www.specialolympicspa.org.

ABOUT THE PENNRIDGE SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Pennridge School District strives to provide all students with a well-rounded educational experience where they acquire the 21st Century skills necessary for a successful future. It is paramount that our students graduate with knowledge of their talents, passions, and what is essential for them to remain lifelong learners and productive citizens. For more information, visit our website www.pennridge.org or call 215-257-5011.

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