



Greater Valley YMCA Partners with Special Olympics Pennsylvania

(Norristown, PA, February 27, 2020) Special Olympics Pennsylvania (SOPA) and the Greater Valley YMCA announced increased fitness and training opportunities for athletes with intellectual disabilities. Effective March 1, 2020, the partnership will connect athletes with seven YMCA facilities in Allentown, Bethlehem, Easton/Phillipsburg, Nazareth, Slate Belt and Suburban North. Both organizations share a similar mission that works to improve the quality of life and well-being for the community.

The partnership will help alleviate the Special Olympics struggle to find suitable locations to train athletes and host local competitions. Athletes in the Special Olympic Programs will have access to the Y facilities where they can train for competitive meets, improve fitness levels and build conditioning skills needed to meet the physical challenges of sports training. Athletes can also train for Olympic-type sports year round as opposed to their current 8-week sessions.

Developing healthy habits is another big challenge facing these athletes and their families. Many have limited healthcare so health issues often go untreated. In order to help combat these issues, the Greater Valley YMCA will be offering a discount for athletes and their families. With the support from the Y, athletes will have regular access to health and wellness programs, group exercise and nutritionists as well as open gym and swim time.

"Special Olympics Pennsylvania strives to ensure that all of our athletes have the resources they need and opportunities to achieve their best," said Matthew Aaron, SOPA President & CEO. "This wonderful new partnership with the Greater Valley YMCA will not only help our athletes continuously improve their conditioning and skills, but help us educate athletes and families about the importance of nutrition and leading a healthy lifestyle."

This collaboration will not only benefit the athletes, but the entire community which the Y serves. In addition to the training and fitness components, community activities and events will help drive the importance of developing youth across generations and diverse populations. The Y connects people from all backgrounds who want to live healthy and feel connected to something bigger than themselves. The relationship between Special Olympics and the Y opens up volunteer opportunities for both organizations and demonstrates the impact that partnerships like this can have on strengthening the community.

"The Greater Valley YMCA is proud to partner with Special Olympics Pennsylvania. The Y believes that all children, individuals, and families – no matter the ability – deserve the opportunity to develop lifelong fitness goals and reach their full potential," said David Fagerstrom, President & CEO, Greater Valley YMCA. "This is a great partnership for the Y, as both organizations work to build healthy communities that are inclusive of all people."

The Greater Valley YMCA joins more than 30 other YMCA facilities in Pennsylvania who have partnered with SOPA to increase opportunities for athletes to develop lifelong fitness goals and reach their full potential. For more information about the partnership and to find local

opportunities to get involved with SOPA and the local YMCAs, visit please visit www.specialolympicspa.org.

About Special Olympics Pennsylvania

Special Olympics Pennsylvania (SOPA) provides year-round training and competition in 21 Olympic-type sports to more than 20,000 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. SOPA is much more than a sports organization. Through its Athlete Leadership Programs, athletes assume meaningful leadership roles, influence change within the Special Olympics movement and take on roles as Global Messengers (trained as public speakers for Special Olympics), athlete representatives, coaches, board members and more. SOPA also addresses major challenges facing its athletes including healthcare. Its Healthy Athletes program offers athletes free health screenings in the form of eye, ear, dental and podiatry assessments. Athletes are also taught how to live active lifestyles, eat healthy and more. Additionally, SOPA strives to create a unified world by promoting inclusion, uniting communities, and changing attitude. 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.

About the Greater Valley YMCA

The Greater Valley YMCA is a volunteer-led, nonprofit community organization. The Y is committed to strengthening community by positively changing lives every day. At each of our Branches, we concentrate our efforts in three areas: Healthy Living, Youth Development, and Social Responsibility. The Greater Valley YMCA serves the Lehigh Valley and consists of Branches in Allentown, Bethlehem, Catasauqua, Easton, Nazareth, and Pen Argyl. To learn more, support, or join the Y, visit gv-ymca.org.

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