



For Immediate Release:

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Special Olympics PA to Hold 42nd Annual Winter Games at Seven Springs Mountain Resort, Feb. 10-12

New Sports Competitions and Venue Changes; Winter Games Polar Plunge on Feb. 2nd

(Norristown, PA, January 29, 2019) – More than 300 athletes and 135 coaches will travel to the 42nd Annual Special Olympics Pennsylvania (SOPA) Winter Games being held for the first-time ever solely at Seven Springs Mountain Resort in Seven Springs, PA from February 10th - 12th. During the course of the event, athletes and coaches participate in three days of exciting winter sports – competing in alpine skiing, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. In addition, a few athletes will participate in a snowboarding demonstration, which is an emerging winter sport for SOPA.

This year's competition will also include the fourth annual Unified Sports Experience featuring Special Olympics athletes (individuals with intellectual disabilities) and partners (individuals without intellectual disabilities) in a friendly snowshoeing competition prior to Opening Ceremonies for the honor of carrying the Special Olympics Flag into Opening.

Opening Ceremonies for the 2019 Winter Games will begin on Sunday, February 10th at 7:00 p.m. in the Seven Springs Mountain Resort Festival Plaza. Co-emceed by WTAE Channel 4's Evening Anchor Shannon Perrine and Beaver County athlete Lydia Wert, the anticipated Opening will feature an array of speakers, and a performance by American Idol participant Aubrey Berchel. There will also be the official lighting of the Olympic Torch by athletes and members of law enforcement, and a fireworks display.

Competition is slated to begin on Monday, February 10th and will offer all events at the Seven Springs Mountain Resort. Awards and Closing Ceremonies are scheduled to take place at each venue respectively from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on February 12th.

The 2019 Winter Games will serve as a qualifier for the 2021 Special Olympics World Winter Games. The Games will also host Healthy Habits programs where interactive education stations will help build awareness of how healthy habits affect sport performance and every life. Noncompeting Health and Fitness Coordinators will be on-site to discuss nutrition and healthy food options. [Click here](#) for more information about our health programs.

"We couldn't be happier to continue our relationship with Seven Springs Mountain Resort and the surrounding communities as they continue to welcome our athletes, coaches, and volunteers with open arms," said Mike Ermer, SOPA's Western Competition Director. "The Winter Games committee has been working diligently to prepare for our 42nd annual event, and the resort is the perfect venue to give our athletes an opportunity to qualify for the 2021 World Winter Games in Sweden."

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To kick-off the Winter Games' 42nd annual celebration, hundreds of brave individuals will be "freezin' for a reason" during the [2019 Winter Games Polar Plunge](#) on Saturday, February 2nd. Supporters will brave the cold waters of Canoe Creek State Park Lake in Hollidaysburg, PA at 12 p.m. with the goal of bringing awareness to the Winter Games and raising funds to help benefit Western PA Special Olympics athletes year-round. The plunge is open to the public (\$50 minimum donation to participate) and all spectators are welcome free of charge. Visit www.PlungePA.org for more information.

Special Olympics Pennsylvania athletes and coaches from the following city/county programs will compete during Winter Games: Allegheny County, Area M (Dauphin, Perry, Cumberland, and Northern York Counties), Area P (Susquehanna, Wayne, Pike, Lackawanna, Wyoming), Armstrong/Indiana Counties, Beaver County, Bethlehem City, Bucks County, Butler County, Centre County, Chester County, Erie, Lancaster County, Lehigh County, Lycoming County, Montgomery County, Northampton County, Somerset County, Washington County, Westmoreland County, York County, and athletes from the states of Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia.

More than 1,200 volunteers from the community, corporations, schools and universities will participate in the event, serving in numerous capacities including as officials, athlete escorts, award presenters, and in administrative support services. Volunteers from across the state are welcome and spectators are encouraged to visit any of the competition venues to cheer on the athletes. For more information, or to volunteer, contact Mike Ermer at 1-800-233-5161 x 243 or mermer@specialolympicspa.org.

Sheetz, Inc. is the Premier Sponsor of the 2019 Winter Games. Additionally, Aerotek, GEICO, Seven Springs Mountain Resort, Sam's Club, DICK'S Sporting Goods, Acme Corrugated Box Company, Chevron, Hidden Valley Resort, Pennsylvania Tourism Office, the David and Marjorie Rosenberg Foundation, the Knights of Columbus, John E. and Sue M. Jackson Charitable Trust, Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc., and the Donald B. and Dorothy L. Stabler Foundation are major sponsors of this year's event. WTAE, the Tribune Democrat, and WTAJ will serve as key Winter Games media partners.

About Special Olympics Pennsylvania

Special Olympics Pennsylvania provides year-round training and competition in 21 Olympic-type sports to nearly 20,000 children and adults with intellectual disabilities. For more information about how you can help *Reveal the Champion Inside* thousands of Special Olympics athletes, visit our web site at www.specialolympicspa.org.