



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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**PIAA AND SPECIAL OLYMPICS PA UNITE FOR THE UNIFIED BOCCÉ
CHAMPIONSHIP AT GIANT CENTER IN HERSHEY, PA – MARCH 21ST**

(Norristown, PA, March 14, 2019) – Students with and without intellectual disabilities will participate in a Unified Indoor Bocce Championship prior to the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA) Boy’s and Girl’s state basketball championships on Thursday, March 21, 2019. The Bocce Championship will occur from 8:30 am – 11am at the Giant Center in Hershey, PA. Awards will be presented during halftime of the PIAA Basketball game from 12:30 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.

This year 12 high school teams, who are a part of the Special Olympics Pennsylvania’s Unified Champion Schools program, earned a spot in this event by winning their county or city championships. The teams will compete on Wednesday evening at Northern High School in York, PA for one of the eight spots for Thursday morning’s finals at the Giant Center in Hershey. The following counties/areas and schools will be represented:

- Centre County - Bald Eagle Area High School
- Blair County - Bellwood - Antis High School
- Philadelphia - Parkway West High School
- Area M - Columbia High School
- Montgomery - Archbishop John Carroll High School
- Bradford/Tioga - North Penn - Liberty High School
- Beaver County - Beaver Area High School
- Chester County - Henderson High School
- Allegheny County – Shaler Area High School
- Mercer/Lawrence/Butler – Ellwood City Jr./Sr. High School
- Clearfield County – Moshannon Valley High School
- Delaware County – Sun Valley High School

“Our partnership with the PIAA is important because our athletes and partners deserve the same opportunities as anyone else to participate in quality sports competitions,” said Matt Aaron, Special Olympics PA President and CEO. “This wonderful relationship helps us provide those quality experiences for more students around the state while promoting the values of inclusion, acceptance, and respect.”

Special Olympics Pennsylvania’s Unified Champion Schools program is aimed at promoting social inclusion through intentionally planned and implemented activities affecting systems-wide change. With sports as the foundation, Unified Champion Schools follow a three component model: Interscholastic Unified Sports, Youth Leadership and Advocacy, and Whole

School Engagement. Interscholastic Unified Sports is a fully-inclusive co-ed high school sports program that brings together a proportional number of students with and without disabilities on teams for training and competition. Whereas, youth leadership, advocacy and whole school engagement promote school climates where students with disabilities feel welcome and are routinely included in, and feel a part of, all activities, opportunities and functions.

Unified Sports® is the one Special Olympics program which helps schools fulfil the requirements of the Department of Education guidance letter reminding schools of the federal law (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973) protecting the rights of all students with disabilities to have equal access to athletics activities.

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 join “The Inclusion Revolution,” visit our web site at www.specialolympicspa.org.

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