



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Special Olympics Pennsylvania Announces New Regional Executive Director

The Regional Executive Director will be in Charge of the Newly Formed Region Serving Berks, Bethlehem, Carbon, Lehigh, Monroe, Northampton and Schuylkill Counties

(Norristown, PA, December 21, 2019) – Special Olympics Pennsylvania (SOPA) recently announced that Julie L. Benjamin will serve as the Regional Executive Director for SOPA’s newly formed regional area covering Berks, Bethlehem, Carbon, Lehigh, Monroe, Northampton and Schuylkill counties.

As Regional Executive Director, Benjamin will be responsible for developing and implementing strategies that align with SOPA’s Strategic Plan, overseeing all region staff and volunteers serving on leadership teams, building strategic partnerships with local schools, universities and colleges and organizations to support volunteer needs, enhancing the athlete experience and increasing athlete participation, and heightening the visibility of SOPA as a whole within the region.

Benjamin has extensive experience in strategic leadership, fundraising, project management and relationship building in the community. Prior to being named Regional Executive Director, Benjamin served as the Director of Communications for the Allentown School district, where she oversaw all aspects of the Office of Communications including media relations and community engagement. She has also previously served as the Vice President of Community Partnerships for ArtsQuest, Executive Director of Levitt Pavilion SteelStacks, and the Senior Vice President of Development & Community Partnerships for PBS 39/WLVT.

“We are thrilled to welcome Julie to our Special Olympics Pennsylvania team,” said Matt Aaron, President & CEO, Special Olympics Pennsylvania. “Her leadership experience, knowledge of the local area and ability to forge lasting community and corporate partnerships will be instrumental as we launch our first region. She is the right leader to help us create a joint volunteer-staff team in the region to better serve our athletes, now and in the future.”

The newly formed region is the first to be launched as part of SOPA’s statewide reorganization of its 54 local programs into nine regions that will help the local programs work together to provide more and better opportunities for athletes. In addition to the regional executive director, each region will have a leadership team made up of staff and volunteers in order to meet the goals and fulfill each region’s strategies. The local programs in Region 5 currently serve nearly 3,500 athletes and 1,000 volunteers and give athletes the opportunity to compete in 20 different sports year round.

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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.

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