

## **Sun Valley High School to Host April Showers Event & Celebrate National Recognition from Special Olympics for Inclusion Efforts**

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

**WHO:**

- Matt Aaron, President & CEO, Special Olympics Pennsylvania (SOPA)
- Dr. George Steinhoff, Superintendent of Penn-Delco School District
- Patrick Sasse, Sun Valley High School Principal
- 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, Sun Valley 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:**

Friday, April 23rd  
9:30 a.m. – National Banner Ceremony  
10:00 a.m. – April Showers Event

**WHERE:**

Sun Valley High School  
2881 Pancoast Ave, Aston, PA 19014

**(Aston, PA, April 21, 2021)** – Sun Valley 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 9:30 a.m. on Friday, April 23rd at Sun Valley High School.

The socially distant celebration will feature cheering athletes and remarks by special guests including Matt Aaron, SOPA President & CEO; Patrick Sasse, principal at Sun Valley High School; and Dr. George Steinhoff, Superintendent of Penn-Delco School District and 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 Aston 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. Sun Valley High School has raised nearly \$1,000.

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Sun Valley 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

“Teachers and Peer Buddy students, past and present, are owed a debt of gratitude for establishing a supportive and welcoming culture at Sun Valley HS,” said Patrick Sasse, Sun Valley Principal. “They have opened so many doors for so many students that have resulted in long-standing friendships and many happy memories. It is wonderful to celebrate their work and to recognize Sun Valley High School as a National Banner School.”

Dr. George Steinhoff, Superintendent of Penn-Delco School District, believes the honor reflects the character of many students in the district.

“The entire school district community is proud of Sun Valley’s accomplishments with its Unified Sports and Peer Buddy programs,” he noted. “Their unified sports program is embraced by the entire school and goes well beyond expected demonstrations of inclusivity and whole-school engagement. National Banner Recognition provides a symbol to their staff and student body that their impressive work has been noticed and acknowledged by an exemplary national organization. This award is just another reason why we are Penn-Delco Proud.”

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.

“Sun Valley High School has an enriching and nurturing climate which prioritizes collaboration, engagement, and respect for all members of the student body and staff,” said Matt Aaron, Special Olympics Pennsylvania President & CEO. “Sun Valley 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. The school has become a leader of the Unified generation and we look forward to seeing their inclusion efforts continue.”

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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**Special Olympics**  
Pennsylvania



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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](http://www.specialolympicspa.org).

***About Penn-Delco School District***

Penn-Delco is located in Southeastern Pennsylvania approximately 15 miles southwest of Philadelphia. The district encompasses Brookhaven and Parkside Boroughs and Aston Township. Approximately 3,400 students are enrolled in grades Kindergarten through 12. The district comprises six schools: Sun Valley High School, Northley Middle School, Aston Elementary School, Coebourn Elementary School, Parkside Elementary School and Pennell Elementary School.

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