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SPECIAL OLYMPICS PENNSYLVANIA LAUNCHES NEW CENTER FOR UNIFIED LEADERSHIP

(NORRISTOWN, PA, November 5, 2019) – Special Olympics Pennsylvania (SOPA) recently launched the first phase of a new initiative to establish the world’s first Center for Unified Leadership. The announcement was made at Villanova University during the President’s Welcome Reception for the 31st Annual Fall Festival on Friday, November 1st. The Center for Unified Leadership will serve as a “center of excellence” for Special Olympics’ leader development efforts including research to foster a deeper understanding of how individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID) lead. The Center will also develop and review curricula, tools and training.

Building from sport, Unified Leadership teaches leaders of all abilities to value and learn from each other, and inspires change to create environments where people with ID succeed in meaningful jobs and roles. This launch marks a first step towards creating a global Center for Unified Leadership in collaboration with Special Olympics International, which will include a network of similar hubs all over the world based on further partnerships with universities, businesses, foundations and thought leaders interested in promoting inclusive leadership.

“The world today is full of volatility, anger, fear of difference and pressures that divide people. The leadership gifts and skills of people with intellectual disabilities are underestimated and undervalued. Special Olympics has for many years shown how to bring people with and without disabilities together to play, learn and live Unified,” said Matthew Aaron, SOPA President & CEO. “The time has now come to go even further, to ‘Lead Unified’, creating inclusive communities where everyone’s skills and gifts are valued.”

SOPA and the Villanova School of Business recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding to explore, develop and carry out collaborative initiatives in support of the Center for Unified Leadership. The first joint endeavor will be a research project aimed at evaluating the

Special Olympics Pennsylvania

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Created by the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation for the benefit of persons with intellectual disabilities

effectiveness of SOPA's athlete leadership curriculum and creating a leader development model for individuals with ID.

"We are incredibly proud of our long-standing relationship with Special Olympics Pennsylvania," said Terrill L. Drake, Associate Dean of Strategic Initiatives at the Villanova School of Business, "and thrilled to be a collaborative partner for this exciting new Center that promises to unlock new discoveries in the area of inclusive leadership."

About Special Olympics Pennsylvania

Special Olympics Pennsylvania provides year-round training and competition in 21 Olympic-type sports to approximately 20,000 children and adults with intellectual disabilities. SOPA empowers athletes through its sports, health, education and leadership programs and envisions a world where people with intellectual disabilities lead healthy and fulfilling lives as respected members of a more inclusive society. For more information about how you can join "The Inclusion Revolution," visit www.specialolympicspa.org.

About the Villanova School of Business

The Villanova School of Business (VSB) undergraduate program is ranked #1 in the nation by Bloomberg Businessweek and its online graduate business programs are ranked #2, and its online MBA program is ranked #13 by U.S. News and World Report. VSB has been at the forefront of business education since it was founded in 1922. Serving over 2,700 undergraduate and graduate students, VSB is home to five Centers of Excellence – the Daniel M. DiLella Center for Real Estate, the Elenore and Robert F. Moran Sr. Center for Global Leadership, the Center for Business Analytics, the Center for Marketing & Consumer Insights and the Center for Church Management – with each designed to foster innovative, cross-disciplinary research and applied opportunities for students. VSB is known for academic rigor; creativity and innovation; hands-on and service learning opportunities; a firm grounding in ethics; and an applied education that prepares students to become outstanding leaders and global citizens within the ever-changing, complex, and fast-paced world of business. For more, visit business.villanova.edu.

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