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PIAA To Host Special Olympics Inaugural Interscholastic Unified Track & Field Invitational *Local High School Students With and Without Disabilities to Compete At Shippensburg University*

(Norristown, PA, May 14, 2015) – Students with and without intellectual disabilities will participate in the inaugural Interscholastic Unified Track and Field Invitational being held in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA) Track and Field Championships on Friday, May 22nd at 3 p.m. and on Saturday, May 23rd at 9 a.m. The Track and Field Invitational will take place at Shippensburg University, located at 1871 Old Main Dr. in Shippensburg, PA. The athletic competitions will involve students from three high schools from Allegheny and Erie Counties, who are a part of the Special Olympics Pennsylvania Interscholastic Unified Sports® (IUS) program.

The high schools participating in the Unified Track & Field Invitational include: Brashear High School from Allegheny County, and General McLane and McDowell High Schools from Erie County. Each Unified Track and Field team has a roster of 12 players, half with and half without intellectual disabilities. At the Invitational, the teams will compete in one of three divisions and be grouped with team members of similar abilities to participate in shot put, mini javelin, running jump log, and 100, 400, and 800 meter events. The Track and Field team that accumulates the highest number of points after all of the events have been completed will finish in first place. An awards ceremony will be held at the conclusion of the competitions on the final day at 2:45 p.m. where gold, silver, and bronze medals will be presented.

Special Olympics Pennsylvania Interscholastic Unified Sports® (IUS) 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. Currently 30 high schools throughout 6 counties are participating in the program and, over the course of four years, Special Olympics Pennsylvania will seek to build a network of partnerships with school districts which encompass all areas of the state. Both the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Bureau of Special Education and the PIAA endorse IUS and have been working collaboratively with SOPA to promote these programs to schools.

"PIAA is proud to collaborate with Special Olympics Pennsylvania to offer unified sport opportunities to students to compete in an athletic environment. This program and others will assist all of us in reaching out to those who may not have an opportunity to participate in athletics," said PIAA Executive Director, Dr. Robert A. Lombardi.

"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."

Unified Sports® is the one Special Olympics program which helps schools fulfill 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 help *Reveal the Champion Inside* thousands of Special Olympics athletes, visit our web site at www.specialolympicspa.org.

About Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association

Beginning in Pittsburgh, on December 29, 1913, PIAA was given the privilege of serving its member schools and registered officials by establishing policies and adopting contest rules that emphasize the educational values of interscholastic athletics, promote safe and sportsmanlike competition and provide uniform standards for all interscholastic levels of competition.

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