

Tourism News



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Contact: Colleen Pillus, (845) 486-2000
cpillus@dutchessny.gov

Anticipation Mounts for Special Olympics New York State Winter Games *Officials look to surpass record-breaking volunteer effort for Feb. 17-18 event*

Poughkeepsie... With just one month to go before the Opening Ceremonies for the 2017 Winter Games, Dutchess County Executive Marc Molinaro today welcomed Special Olympics New York President and CEO Neal J. Johnson and local athletes today to the Hudson Valley, which will host the Winter Games on Feb. 17th-18th, as part of a final push for volunteers.

For the second straight year, Dutchess, Orange and Sullivan counties will host the annual event, which will bring nearly 1,000 athletes and coaches from around the state to the Hudson Valley.

“This year’s Winter Games will look to replicate the record-breaking event we enjoyed last year in the Hudson Valley,” Mr. Johnson said. “From the outpouring of encouragement our athletes received during the opening ceremony and competition in 2016, to the number of volunteers and support from local sponsors who made the Winter Games possible, we couldn’t be happier to return to the region. I know the Hudson Valley will again make this weekend memorable for all involved, again setting an example for future Winter Games throughout the state.”

The Hudson Valley set records in 2016 for both the number of volunteers and time period in which they signed up. Building on that historic volunteer turnout, organizers again encouraged local residents to volunteer to make the Winter Games as successful as possible.

County Executive Molinaro, who again serves as the Honorary Chair for the 2017 Winter Games, said, “We in Dutchess County have asked our residents to THINK DIFFERENTLY about our neighbors with special needs, and the Special Olympics are a great example of how that initiative has been embraced in our community. Wherever local volunteers have been needed – setting up competition venues, keeping score, rooting for these exceptional athletes from the stands – our

residents have stepped up and answered the call to THINK DIFFERENTLY. I'm confident we'll see a final surge in volunteers to help us surpass the historic levels we set in 2016. This inspirational weekend of competition and friendship will be one in which everyone involved will take pride, and Dutchess County is honored to be the center of activity for the 2017 Winter Games."

In addition to service volunteers, Special Olympics New York seeks volunteers to be ***Fans in the Stands*** for the weekend. Athletes will arrive at the State Winter Games from all over New York, and many families cannot make the trip. Volunteers from the community are needed to attend the competitions, watch and cheer for these champions. For more information on all volunteer opportunities, including those to cheer for the athletes during competition, visit:

www.SpecialOlympicsNY.org.

The Games Organizing Committee (GOC) has organized the various aspects of the event, securing local community support and sponsorship, and working to provide a unique Hudson Valley feel to the Games. The Co-Chairs of the 2017 State Winter Games GOC are Mary Kay Vrba, president and CEO of Dutchess Tourism Inc., and Frank M. Castella Jr., president and CEO of the Dutchess County Regional Chamber of Commerce.

The 2017 State Winter Games will commence on February 17th with Opening Ceremonies, including a ceremonial parade of athletes, motivational speeches, local entertainment and the Law Enforcement Torch Run at the Mid-Hudson Civic Center in the City of Poughkeepsie. The Mid-Hudson Civic Center will also host Closing Ceremonies and a Victory Dance on February 18th.

Event venues include:

- **Alpine Skiing** – Holiday Mountain Ski Area, 99 Holiday Mountain Road in Monticello
- **Cross-Country Skiing and Snowshoeing** – Bowdoin Park, 85 Sheafe Road in the Town of Poughkeepsie
- **Figure Skating** – McCann Ice Arena, 14 Civic Center Plaza in the City of Poughkeepsie
- **Floor Hockey** – Stewart Air National Guard Base, 1 Maguire Way in Newburgh

“The generosity of our local hotels, competition venues and various partners in the Hudson Valley is unparalleled anywhere in New York State,” Mr. Castella said. “Their support will again ensure athletes and their families will not incur any cost to take part in this terrific event. We thank all who have pledged their support, and we look forward to adding even more volunteers to our growing list, all of whom will selflessly give their time to benefit this worthy cause.”

The Platinum Sponsor for the State Winter Games is Westchester Medical Center Health Network. At the Gold sponsorship level, The Arc of Dutchess, Arnoff Moving & Storage, and Central Hudson Gas & Electric. At the Silver level, Access: Support for Living, Chobani, Greystone Programs, and Turk Hospitality Group are sponsors. At the Bronze level, Abilities First, Adams Fairacre Farms, Anderson Center for Autism, Marshall & Sterling Insurance, M&T Bank, and New Horizons Resources are sponsors. Media sponsors include the Poughkeepsie Journal, iHeartMedia, Townsquare Media, Pamal Broadcasting, Highway Displays, and J6 MediaWorks.

“Our residents’ giving nature makes us distinctly Dutchess, and it’s one of the reasons visitors from across the world travel to our county each year. It’s also what makes hosting these Winter Games so inspiring – seeing our community answer our call and come out in force to support these athletes in whatever way they can,” Ms. Vrba said. “There’s still time for local residents to sign up to volunteer, giving of themselves while ensuring their neighbors from across the state enjoy a weekend of fun and camaraderie they’ll never forget.”

Special Olympics New York will host the Fishkill Polar Plunge at Sharpe Reservation on Saturday, Feb. 25th. Participants can support the athletes of Special Olympics New York by taking a dip in the chilly waters. Registration is open at www.PolarplungeNY.org. Donors are asked to raise \$100 to receive an official Polar Plunge sweatshirt.