

Tourism News



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Contact: Nancy Lutz, 845-463-5446

Special Olympics New York Winter Games Returns to Hudson Valley In 2017

Poughkeepsie... The **Special Olympics New York Winter Games** return to the Hudson Valley region in February 2017, following the recording breaking success of last year Games. Once again, **1,000 athletes and coaches** will travel from around New York State to compete in a variety of winter sports at venues in Dutchess, Orange and Sullivan counties. **Honorary Chairman Marcus Molinaro** was joined today at Bowdoin Park by Special Olympics New York officials, Special Olympics athletes, members of the local Games Organizing Committee and local sponsors to announce the return of the Games.

The **Hudson Valley Region** hosted the Special Olympics New York Winter Games for the first time in 2016 and **broke records** for volunteer recruitment, fan attendance and sponsorship support. More in-kind support was secured for the 2016 Winter Games than any other in the history of the event and it was first time ever that all event venues were made available at no cost.

“The Hudson Valley welcomed the Special Olympics with open arms and we are thrilled to bring the Winter Games back to the region in 2017,” said **Neal Johnson**, president and CEO of Special Olympics New York.

“Last year was a truly special moment for our community, coming together to be celebrate, cheer and be inspired by the athletes of the Special Olympics New York Winter Games. The Special Olympics athletes remind each of us that challenges and obstacles can be overcome when we choose to **ThinkDIFFERENTLY**,” said Dutchess County Executive Marc Molinaro. “We are excited to break the records we set last year with even more volunteers, fans and sponsorship support!”

The 2017 Winter Games will commence on February 17, 2017 with **Opening Ceremonies**, including a ceremonial parade of athletes, local entertainment and the **Law Enforcement Torch Run** at the **Mid-Hudson Civic Center** in the City of Poughkeepsie, which will also host an Olympic Village throughout the weekend. The Mid-Hudson Civic Center will also host Closing Ceremonies and a Victory Dance on February 18, 2017.

Event venues include:

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

County Executive Molinaro will again serve as the Honorary Chair of the event. **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** return as Co-Chairs for the **Games Organizing Committee (GOC)**, who organize the various aspects of the games, secure local community support and sponsorship and provide a unique Hudson Valley feel to the Games.

“Our local community truly stepped up last year to welcome the Special Olympics New York Winter Games, embracing the Special Olympics’ mission of providing athletes with positive, life-affirming experiences at no cost to them or their families. We look forward to that continued support in 2017,” Mr. Castella said.

“It was an honor to the Special Olympics Winter Games last year and we can’t wait to do it again! We put on quite a show last year, creating a memorable experience for all involved, and look forward to making even better in 2017,” Ms. Vrba said.

The 2017 Special Olympic Winter Games will again require extensive local support to be as successful as possible. Local volunteers – individuals or groups – are needed for various jobs throughout the weekend.

For information and to register online, visit www.specialolympicsny.org/winter or email volunteer@nyso.org. Local businesses and organizations can also provide support through a range of sponsorship opportunities.

For information about sponsorships, contact Renee Snyder, Vice President of Development & Public Awareness, [518-203-8348](tel:518-203-8348) or rsnyder@nyso.org; or Sponsorship Chairman Nevill Smythe at nevillsmythe@gmail.com .

Special Olympics is the largest amateur sports organization in the world. With **67,162 athletes**, **Special Olympics New York is the largest chapter in North America** and the **sixth-largest** chapter in the world. These Winter Games are one of three annual state games and one of more than 5,000 total competitive experiences held each year throughout New York. Special Olympics New York athletes train and compete year-round in 22 sports, the Young Athletes Program and the Motor Activities Training Program – **at no cost to the athletes, their families or their caregivers.**

“So mark your calendars for Feb. 17 and 18th, 2017 to volunteer and come out and cheer! Let’s again show New York State how we in Dutchess County ‘#ThinkDIFFERENTLY’ about those with special needs,” concluded County Executive Molinaro.