



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Special Olympics International Contact:  
Theresa Fitzpatrick  
P: (202) 824-0329  
[tfitzpatrick@specialolympics.org](mailto:tfitzpatrick@specialolympics.org)

Special Olympics Massachusetts Contact:  
Charles Hirsch  
P: (508) 485-0986 ext. 223  
[charles.hirsch@specialolympicsma.org](mailto:charles.hirsch@specialolympicsma.org)

**Milford Special Olympics athlete to play in NBA Cares Game during All-Star Weekend 2019**  
*Special Olympics Announces Twelve Athletes Competing in NBA Cares Unified Sports® Game*

**MARLBOROUGH, MA** – January 15, 2019: Special Olympics has selected 12 athletes to compete in the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual NBA Cares Special Olympics Unified Sports® Game, including Ashley Aldrich from Milford. The Unified Sports Game will take place on Friday, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019 in Charlotte, NC as part of NBA All-Star 2019. The game will be held at Bojangles Coliseum at 5:00 p.m. ET.

The NBA Cares Special Olympics Unified Game represents a 44-year global partnership between Special Olympics and the NBA. Taking place each year during NBA All-Star, the Unified Game pairs an equal number of Special Olympics athletes (individuals with intellectual disabilities) and NBA and WNBA players and legends in a 40-minute game of inclusion and acceptance.

This year's Unified game will feature 12 Special Olympics athletes representing 7 countries, as well as athletes competing in Special Olympics World Games Abu Dhabi 2019. Each athlete will enjoy an unforgettable NBA All-Star experience, including a meet-and-greet with members of the NBA family and tickets to events throughout the week.

"We are proud to continue our partnership with the NBA and to be leaders in creating more inclusive opportunities to play the game. The annual unified game gives us another opportunity to showcase the abilities of not only the Special Olympics athletes, but the power of Unified Sports to change hearts and minds." – said Editra Allen, Director of Games and Competition.

Ashley has been playing basketball since she was young, and volunteers in the Special Education department at Milford High School. Basketball is special to Ashley because it was a sport she played with her dad, who passed away eight years ago. Her favorite thing about basketball is the opportunity to play with friends, and she is excited to meet other passionate basketball players at NBA All-Star Weekend.

Jen Walsh, Local Program Coordinator for the Milford Special Olympics program and Transition/Vocation Coordinator at Milford High School, nominated Ashley for the honor.

"As long as I've known her since she was a small child she has lived for basketball and it's her passion. I know her favorite memories were always with her dad growing up," Walsh said. "She's an excellent teammate, she's always sharing and setting up other players. She's about everybody as a team."



First held at NBA All-Star 2012, the NBA Cares Special Olympics Unified Basketball Game continues the long-standing partnership that started when the league helped to introduce the sport of basketball to Special Olympics more than 40 years ago. Following the game, NBA and WNBA legends will host more than 50 youth athletes from local Special Olympics Programs for a basketball clinic at the Charlotte Convention Center. The NBA and WNBA legends playing alongside these determined athletes on February 15 will be announced in the coming month.

### **Athletes**

Micheal Wright, *Canada\**

Andrew Smilley, *Cayman Islands\**

Janaiya Warren, *United States (Florida)*

Brendan Connolly, *Ireland*

Ashley Aldrich, *United States (Massachusetts)*

Marquise Ledbetter, *United States (North Carolina)*

Mikami Hayato, *Japan\**

Micah Gumness, *United States (Wisconsin)*

Kyle Emery, *United States (Colorado)*

Sebastijan Abel, *Germany*

Leanne Woolfe, *Great Britain\**

Kellie Hearne, *United States (North Carolina)*

*\*competing in Special Olympics World Games Abu Dhabi 2019*

### **About NBA All-Star 2019**

NBA All-Star 2019 in Charlotte, N.C., will bring together the most talented and passionate players in the league's history for a global celebration of the game. The 68th NBA All-Star Game, which will take place on Sunday, Feb. 17, at Spectrum Center, will reach fans in more than 200 countries and territories in more than 40 languages. TNT will televise the All-Star Game for the 17th consecutive year, marking Turner Sports' 34th year of NBA All-Star coverage. Spectrum Center will also host MTN DEW ICE Rising Stars on Friday, Feb. 15, and State Farm All-Star Saturday Night on Saturday, Feb. 16. The NBA All-Star Celebrity Game presented by Ruffles and NBA All-Star Practice & Media Day will take place at Bojangles' Coliseum.

### **About Special Olympics Massachusetts**

Special Olympics Massachusetts (SOMA) provides year-round sports training, athletic competition and other related programming for over 12,500 athletes with intellectual disabilities throughout the state at nearly 300 events per year. Locally, over 600 athletes take part in Special Olympics programming and are able to do this at no cost. Through the power of sport, our movement transforms the lives of people with intellectual disabilities. It also unites everyone by fostering a sense of community and building a civil society. For more information visit <http://www.SpecialOlympicsMA.org>

### **About Special Olympics International**

Special Olympics is a global inclusion movement using sport, health, education and leadership programs every day around the world to end discrimination against and empower people with intellectual disabilities. Founded in 1968, and celebrating its 50th Anniversary this year, the Special Olympics movement has grown to more than 6 million athletes and Unified Sports partners in more than 170 countries. With the support of more than 1 million coaches and volunteers, Special Olympics delivers 32 Olympic-type sports and over 100,000 games and competitions throughout the year. Special Olympics is supported by individuals, foundations and partners, including Bank of America, the Christmas Records



Trust, The Coca-Cola Company, ESPN, Essilor Vision Foundation, the Golisano Foundation, the Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics, Lions Clubs International Foundation, Microsoft, Safilo Group, Stavros Niarchos Foundation, TOYOTA, United Airlines, and The Walt Disney Company. [Click here for a full list of partners.](#) Engage with us on: [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), [Instagram](#) and [our blog on Medium](#). Learn more at [www.SpecialOlympics.org](http://www.SpecialOlympics.org).

XXX