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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Release No. 14-106

Oct. 30, 2014

Fort Leonard Wood to host Special Olympics games

FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo. – More than 1,800 athletes and coaches from across the Show Me state will converge on the installation March 27-29, 2015 for the first-ever State Indoor Games featuring solely basketball and bowling.

“Fort Leonard Wood will provide accommodations, meals, transportation, basketball, bowling and other venues and facilities to support SOMO athletes,” said Col. Andrew Herbst, Fort Leonard Wood Garrison commander. “This will require installation synchronization, which has already begun. An installation planning team has discussed support requirements and coordination of all levels of support in order to make this a first-class event.”

The post has hosted small, area SOMO competitions but nothing on a state-wide scale since the 2006 Fall Sports Classic. A portion of the basketball games will be held at the Waynesville R-VI School District’s basketball facilities.

“It’s hard for us to find facilities that not only have enough basketball courts, but also enough bowling lanes for us to finish all of our brackets over the course of one weekend,” said Brandon Schatsiek, Special Olympics Missouri public relations manager. “The facilities for both bowling and basketball that Fort Leonard Wood has to offer are top-notch.”

Athletes have been asking when the games were coming back to Fort Leonard Wood, according to Schatsiek.

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“Athletes either remember what it was like or have heard the stories from other athletes on how special it was to compete at the fort and the kind of reception that they received, either while playing in their games, during the opening ceremony or just while on the post in general,” Schatsiek said.

Fort Leonard Wood hosting the State Indoor Games is the result of the SOMO committee’s self-evaluation to offer the best sport competitions and schedule for the athletes and coaches. For the last couple of years, there was a two-state competition schedule. The Summer Games were held in late May (power lifting, track and field, bowling, basketball, aquatics and volleyball) and the Outdoor Games in early October (soccer, bocce, softball, tennis, golf and flag football).

“After talking to parents and coaches, we found that those seasons were a little too long and didn’t offer a long enough break in between seasons,” Schatsiek said. “Also, at the state competition level, our athletes can only participate in one team sport and one individual sport. “What this does is take SOMO’s two largest sports at the Summer Games and put them into their own competition where athletes can play both basketball and bowling and allow them to participate in other Summer Games sports,” Schatsiek added.

Individuals desiring to assist with the SOMO State Indoor Games may sign up to volunteer at www.somo.org/indoor.

The site will be live and ready for volunteers to sign up for specific times and specific positions a couple of months out from the Games. Volunteer positions range from assisting athletes on the bowling lanes to handing out awards.

This is a tremendous opportunity to work with Special Olympic athletes who are so inspirational, according to Herbst.

“These athletes demonstrate what a person can aspire to and attain when challenged with disabilities. These athletes display terrific resolve to accomplish their goals and never give up,” Herbst said. “There is no more important lesson they can teach our young Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines than to work hard and never give up.”

Fort Leonard Wood has a history of hosting the SOMO events and games. Some central area competitions are also held at Whiteman Air Force Base, located in Sedalia, Missouri.

“Every partnership that we have around the state is incredibly important to us, but any time we can do something with the troops, we’re all in,” Schatsiek said. “We truly appreciate all that you do for us and just want to bring the experience of working alongside our incredible athletes straight to you.”

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“It’s great to hear after the Games just how much everyone gets out of the experience, because both the athletes and the troops talk about how amazing it was. We like to say that once you’ve volunteered at one of our events with some of our athletes, you’re hooked. We’re honored to be able to spend some time with you and show you exactly what these athletes can do,” he said. Herbst added the Games reinforce the Performance Triad of adequate sleep, physical activity and proper nutrition. “They are the key aspects of athletic and service member performance and have the biggest impact on health, wellness and athletic performance,” he said.

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For more information, contact the Fort Leonard Wood Public Affairs Office at 573.563.4145.

(Mike Bowers is the Guidon managing editor.)

About Fort Leonard Wood

Fort Leonard Wood is a thriving and prosperous installation that has evolved from a small basic training post 70 years ago to a premier Army Center of Excellence that trains more than 80,000 military and civilians each year.

Home to the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence, Fort Leonard Wood now trains and educates service members and develops doctrine and capabilities for the Training and Doctrine Command’s U.S. Army Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear School, U.S. Army Engineer School, and U.S. Army Military Police School, three gender integrated Initial Military Training brigades, one of only five reception stations in the Army, and the Army’s largest Noncommissioned Officers Academy.

Over the past several years, Fort Leonard Wood has received numerous additional responsibilities to include supporting the 4th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, a large Forces Command unit that is responsible for all deployable capabilities at Fort Leonard Wood. A colonel-commanded Marine Corps Detachment and an Air Force Detachment, which are both the largest on any Army installation, are located on Fort Leonard Wood; a large Navy Seabee Detachment and elements of the Coast Guard train here as well.
