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## **Fort Leonard Wood hosts major portion of 2015 Special Olympics Missouri State Indoor Games**

**FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo.** – Nearly 1,800 athletes from throughout the Show-Me State filled Daugherty Bowling Center and Davidson Fitness Center over the weekend, as Fort Leonard Wood hosted major portions of the 2015 Special Olympics Missouri State Indoor Games.

"There's just something different about having a competition on (post)," said Brandon Schatsiek, Public Relations Coordinator with Special Olympics Missouri. "When you have the support from (Fort Leonard Wood) and from the Soldiers and Marines as a source of volunteers, the athletes love it. I don't know how else to put it, other than the athletes really love being here, seeing everybody in their uniforms, getting a hug from them. It kind of takes the competition to another level -- it really does."

Competition began at 8 a.m. Friday at the bowling center, which also served as the games' Victory Village. While bowling action took place inside DBC, outside, athletes and Family members could play a variety of carnival games and activities, including static military vehicle displays, manned by volunteers in uniform.

"That's so big -- to me, it's just really big," said Jeremy Turner, a SOMO athlete from Moberly, Missouri, as he talked with Sgt. 1st Class John Caldwell about Mine Clearance Protective Vehicle, commonly known as a Buffalo.

Turner had already won a gold medal in the first round of bowling.

Dozens of volunteers were on hand to cheer on athletes and assist with games and events. Marine Pvt. Homer Reyna, one of about 30 Marines who volunteered on Friday inside and outside the bowling center, relished the chance to lend a hand.

"Just to volunteer is very rewarding," Reyna said, adding that he appreciated being a part of "the excitement and the atmosphere" of the games.

After a day of bowling, athletes gathered at Gammon Field for the State Indoor Games' official opening ceremonies. The ceremony included music by the 399th Army Band's Rough Riders, the parade of athletes and the lighting of the torch.

"This is a special night for everyone as we kick off the first main event to be held at Fort Leonard Wood since 2006," said Col. Andrew Herbst, Garrison commander.

As the 399th Army Band played and teams from each SOMO area paraded onto the field, athletes were cheered on and given high fives from Soldiers from Companies B and C, 84th Chemical Battalion, and Company C, 35th Engineer Battalion. Soldiers with the 14th Military Police Brigade conducted the torch run, which culminated with the lighting of main torch by athlete Joshua Smith of Schuyler County, Missouri.

Maj. Gen. Leslie Smith, Maneuver Support Center of Excellence and Fort Leonard Wood commanding general, declared the games officially open.

"We talk a lot about competence, commitment and character," Smith said. "We talk a lot about the missions that we ask our young people to do, but all of you athletes demonstrate the character to come out here to train, the character to prepare for the mission that you're going to do and the character to win medals in the events you will be competing in."

Saturday's events centered on basketball, with what Schatsiek said were roughly "250 to 300" teams playing throughout the morning and afternoon.

Games took place on post at Davidson Fitness Center and also in nearby Waynesville at Waynesville High School.

Scott Boucher, coach of the Kansas City Red Northstars, said that members of his team had practiced every Saturday for the past three months to prepare for the State Indoor Games.

"I actually like this facility," Boucher said as the Red Northstars, who are based in the North Kansas City School District, prepared to take on the Wildcats from southwest St. Louis County at DFC, which had three courts operating simultaneously.

"We played at (the state-level competition) last year, and this is much more organized," Boucher said. "It's a better experience this year. The (athletes) have got to do a lot of things and interact with the Soldiers and Marines. They're loving it."

Saturday's events concluded with a victory dance for athletes at Nutter Field House, where athletes challenged Soldiers and Marines to push-up competitions.

The SOMO Indoor State Games concluded Sunday with bowling competitions at DBC on post and at Coachlite Lanes in Rolla.

- 30 -

Encl. (2) Photos

Photo Cutlines:

**SOMO Torch Lighting:** Joshua Smith, from Schuyler County, Mo., lights the torch to help open the 2015 SOMO State Indoor Games Friday at Gammon Field. Nearly 1,800 athletes took part in the 2015 games.

**SOMO at Daugherty Bowling Center:** Becky Pace, form St. Joseph, Mo., bowls a practice round on Lane 1 at Daugherty Bowling Center Friday during the Special Olympics Missouri State Indoor Games. Nearly 1,250 bowlers took part in the games, held at Fort Leonard Wood and Rolla

#### *About Fort Leonard Wood*

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*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 about 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, 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.*

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