



SPECIAL OLYMPICS  
**USA GAMES**  
SEATTLE 2018



## Media Guide

### Opening Ceremony of 2018 Special Olympics USA Games

**Official Name of Event:** 2018 Special Olympics USA Games

**Date and Time of Opening Ceremony:** 12:30 p.m. (Pacific), Sunday, July 1, 2018

**Location:** University of Washington's Husky Stadium in Seattle, Washington

**Run-Time:** The Opening Ceremony is choreographed to run two hours in length.

**TV Coverage:** ESPN, the official media partner of the 2018 Special Olympics USA Games, will telecast the Opening Ceremony live on ABC.

**TV Host:** ESPN's Kevin Negandhi.

**In-Stadium Host:** Taye Diggs

**Running Order of Opening Ceremony\*:** Following is the of order activities that will take place during the two-hour ceremony. The ceremony is divided into four sections: "Earth/Dignity", "Air/Courage", "Water/Unity" and "Fire/Joy". \* **Schedule is subject to change.**

#### SECTION 1: Earth/Dignity

1. Video 'Celebration of the Athletes'
2. Welcome by ESPN's Kevin Negandhi
3. ESPN's in-stadium host and emcee Taye Diggs to introduce Special Olympics athletes who will reveal and talk about the four elements of this year's Games: Earth (introduced by Cindy Bently, a bocce athlete from Milwaukee, Wisc.), Air (Wyatt Spalding, tennis champion from Fremont, Neb.), Water (Angela Zhu, basketball athlete from Pomona, Calif.) and Fire (Renee Manfredi, soccer athlete from Aiea, Hawaii)
4. Performance by DJ Marshmello
5. Performance by The Groovaloos
6. Performance by the Seattle Seahawks Blue Thunder
7. Parade of Athletes led by co-Grand Marshals Tim Corrigan and Shaquem Griffin; there will be 4,000 athletes, coaches and delegates entering the stadium by U.S. state -introduced by Special Olympics soccer athlete Cory Dempsey from the state of Washington and legendary voice of the UW Huskies Bob Rondeau
8. Performance by "American Idol" winner Maddie Poppe

## SECTION 2: Air/Courage

8. Official Welcome by Washington state Governor Jay Inslee
9. Singing of the National Anthem by Ann Wilson of Heart
10. Special Olympics coach Bea Webb from Missouri talks with Taye Diggs about theme of Air/Courage. Also features video message from Arthur, one of Ms. Webb's athletes back in Missouri
11. Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella speaks about the power of teamwork
12. WWE (World Wrestling Entertainment) stars Stephanie McMahon, Mark Henry and Charlotte Flair discuss Courage and lead athletes in three cheers of "Rise with Us!"
13. Comedian Tig Notaro and Special Olympics athletes Shebbie Eubanks and Frannie Ronan talk about "Diversity of All Kinds"
14. Performance by "The Voice" singer Kyla Jade and eight dancers
15. Special Olympics International's Global Inspiration Officer Loretta Claiborne speaks
16. Video presenting look at "50 Years of Games: Past and Future"
15. Opening address by Tim Shriver, Chairman, Special Olympics

## SECTION 3: Water/Unity

16. ESPN host and Paralympian Victoria Arlen and Special Olympics swimmer Travis Moss introduce Water/Unity theme
18. Cultural presentation from Coast Salish Sea Peoples: Welcome, Bless and Celebrate Canoe Journey
19. NFL Hall of Fame football player and former Seattle Seahawk Walter Jones introduces Water Dance
20. River performance including ribbon release
21. Former congressman, Seattle Seahawk and NFL Hall of Famer Steve Largent introduces the flag introduction along with South Carolina Unified soccer team (including athlete Josh Myers and unified partner Ian McCowan)
22. Microsoft President and Honorary Chairman of the 2018 Special Olympics USA Games, Brad Smith speaks about inclusion and unity.
23. Former Seattle Supersonic and NBA Hall of Famer Gary Payton speaks about inclusion.

24. Reading of 'Officials' Oath' by Stacey Johnston-Gleason, USA Games Board of Directors
25. Reading of 'Coaches' Oath' by Michael Storandt, Special Olympics North Dakota
26. Reading of 'Athletes' Oath' by Ayesha Abdul-Jillil, Special Olympics Alaska
27. Performance by Allen Stone and USA Games' Choir

#### SECTION 4: Fire/Joy

28. Eight-time Olympics medalist speed skater Apolo Ohno speaks about elements of Fire with Special Olympics paddle boarder Devon Adelman from the state of Washington
29. Taye Diggs speaks with Special Olympics golfer Chris Harold and his dad and coach Ray Harold of Freehold, New Jersey
30. Video presentation of the "Journey of the Flame"
23. Entrance of the Flame of Hope by torch runners Law Enforcement Torch Run representative Jason Johnson and John Sherbert
24. Lighting of the Cauldron by athlete Jennifer Goodley
25. The Official Opening of the Games by presenter Shaquem Griffin
26. Celebratory performance by Charlie Puth

#### **Bios of Key Presenters and Performers (In Order of Appearance)**

*Kevin Negandhi, ESPN:* Mr. Negandhi is an anchor on the Emmy nominated SportsCenter. He joined ESPN in 2006 and previously hosted the 2015 Special Olympics World Games.

*Taye Diggs, Actor and Singer:* Mr. Diggs is known for his roles in the Broadway musicals "Rent", "Hedwig and the Angry Inch", the TV series "Private Practice", the films "How Stella Got Her Groove Back", "Brown Sugar" and "The Best Man".

*Marshmello, DJ and Producer:* Marshmello is a world renowned artist who's garnered more than two billion streams across Spotify with 40 million monthly listeners, making him the fifth most-listened to artist in the world.

*Groovaloops, Dancers:* The Groovaloops are an award-winning hip-hop and street dance troupe that has performed on "So You Think You Can Dance", "The Ellen DeGeneres Show" and "Late Night with Jimmy Fallon."

*Seattle Seahawks Blue Thunder, Drumline:* The high-energy entertainment drumline was established in 2004 and is known for performing throughout CenturyLink Field before, during and after Seahawks games.

*Tim Corrigan, Special Olympics Athlete and Co-Grand Marshal:* Mr. Corrigan is a 75-year-old Special Olympics athlete who lit the torch and competed at the first Special Olympics games in 1968 in Chicago.

*Shaquem Griffin, Seattle Seahawk and Co-Grand Marshal:* Mr. Griffin is the Seahawks' talented and inspiring rookie linebacker.

*Maddie Poppe, Singer:* Ms. Poppe is the 20-year-old winner of the most-recent "American Idol" competition.

*Governor Jay Inslee:* Mr. Inslee is the 23<sup>rd</sup> and current governor of the state of Washington.

*Ann Wilson, Musician:* Ms. Wilson is a singer-songwriter and member of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame band Heart.

*Satya Nadella, CEO, Microsoft:* Mr. Nadella is an Indian American business executive and CEO of Microsoft. He succeeded Steve Balmer in 2014.

*Mark Henry, WWE:* Mr. Henry is an American powerlifter, Olympic weightlifter, strongman, and professional wrestler who is currently signed to WWE as a producer. He is a two-time Olympian and a gold, silver and bronze medalist at the Pan American Games in 1995.

*Stephanie McMahon, WWE:* Ms. McMahon is an American businesswoman, professional wrestling personality and occasional professional wrestler. She is also currently the Chief Brand Officer of WWE and serves as the on-screen commissioner of WWE's Raw Brand.

*Charlotte Flair, WWE:* Ms. Flair is an American professional wrestler, author and actress currently signed to WWE, where she performs on the SmackDown brand. A second generation professional wrestler, she is the daughter of two time Hall of Famer Ric Flair.

*Tig Notaro, Comedian:* Ms. Notaro is a Grammy-nominated stand-up comic, writer, radio contributor and actress.

*Kyla Jade, Singer:* Ms. Jade was a finalist in the most-recent season of "The Voice." She is also a prominent gospel and rhythm and blues singer who provides background vocals for Jennifer Hudson.

*Loretta Claiborne, Special Olympics International's Global Inspiration Officer:* Ms. Claiborne is an American global speaker who competes in the Special Olympics and in 1996 was honored by ESPN with an ESPY Arthur Ashe Courage Award presented to her by Denzel Washington.

*Tim Shriver, Chairman, Special Olympics International:* Mr. Shriver leads the International Board of Directors and serves together with over 5.6 million Special

Olympics athletes in 172 countries to provide health, education and a more unified world through the joy of sports.

*Victoria Arlen, ESPN:* Ms. Arlen is a host on ESPN as well as an actress, speaker, model and former American Paralympian swimmer.

*Coast Salish American Drum Circle:* The Coast Salish is a group of technically and linguistically indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest Coast, living in British Columbia, Canada and the U.S. states of Washington and Oregon.

*Walter Jones, Hall of Fame football player:* Mr. Jones is a former NFL football player who spent his entire professional career with the Seattle Seahawks and is a member of the Ring of Honor.

*Steve Largent, Hall of Fame football player:* Mr. Largent is an NFL Hall of Fame football player and former congressman. He played his entire professional career with the Seattle Seahawks and is a member of the Ring of Honor.

*Brad Smith, President, Microsoft:* Mr. Smith is president and chief legal officer at Microsoft where he is responsible for the company's corporate, external and legal affairs.

*Gary Payton, NBA Hall of Famer and Former Seattle Supersonic:* Mr. Payton is a nine-time NBA all-star, a Hall of Fame member and former point guard for the Seattle Supersonics.

*Stacey Johnston-Gleason, Board of Directors, Special Olympics:* Ms. Johnston-Gleason is a Special Olympics athlete, official and board member. Over the course of her career, she has competed in 18 different sports and is now focused on golf. She says that sports have taught her sportsmanship, friendship, and the freedom to feel good about herself.

*Michael Storandt, Special Olympics North Dakota:* Mr. Storandt is a Special Olympics coach from Grand Forks, North Dakota.

*Ayesha Abdul-Jillil, Special Olympics Alaska:* Ms. Abdul-Jillil is a Special Olympics athlete from Alaska.

*Allen Stone, Singer and Musician:* Mr. Stone is an American soul and rhythm and blues artist that USA Today has called "a pitch-perfect powerhouse." He's a native of Chewelah, Washington near Spokane.

*USA Games' Choir:* At 2,018 members strong, the choir includes choral groups of all sizes from across the Pacific Northwest. It is one of the largest vocal ensembles ever assembled in Washington state. The choir is led by Rafe Wadleigh, director of choral music for the middle and upper schools at Charles Wright Academy in Tacoma. Wadleigh has more than 20 years of experience directing choral ensembles, building music programs and performing.

*Apolo Ohno, Olympics Champion:* Mr Ohno is a retired American speed skater from Seattle. During his Olympic career, he won eight medals including two gold, two silver and four bronze).

*Charlie Puth, Singer and Songwriter:* Mr. Puth is a multi-Grammy nominated singer, songwriter and producer whose multi-platinum hits include “See You Again,” “One Call Away,” and “Attention.”

### **Key Elements of Opening Ceremony**

- The event will create a distinctly Pacific Northwest environment within the University of Washington’s Husky Stadium.
- Celebrity guests will be paired with a Special Olympics athlete and make a one-minute scripted presentation during each section of the ceremony (Earth/Dignity, Air/Courage, Water/Unity and Fire/Joy).
- Seating behind the stage will be occupied by a 2,018-person choir for the duration of the Opening Ceremony, offering a powerful human soundtrack for the program.
- Highly recognizable performers will entertain spectators and build excitement for the Parade of Athletes as athletes from every state in the country enter the stadium.
- The Opening Ceremony culminates in the entrance of the flame, the lighting of the 13-foot-tall cauldron and the official opening of the 2018 Special Olympics USA Games.

### **Key Team Members Who Organized the Opening Ceremonies**

Executive Producer: Jayme Powers

Production Company: XPL

Choir Director: Rafe Wadleigh

Cauldron Creation: Miguel Edwards

### **Related Information and Stats**

- The Opening Ceremony will include more than 3,000 athletes, 1,000 coaches and 10,000 volunteers.
- The Opening Ceremony will have more than 30,000 spectators in attendance.
- The economic impact of the weeklong 2018 Special Olympics USA Games is projected to be \$76.4 million.

### **Press Contacts**

Any media that need support in covering the Opening Ceremony can contact: Jaymelina Esmele at [jesmele@specialolympicsusagames.org](mailto:jesmele@specialolympicsusagames.org) or (206) 788-8964.

## **About the 2018 Special Olympics USA Games**

The 2018 Special Olympics USA Games will be held in Seattle, Washington July 1-6, 2018. More than 4,000 participants representing all 50 states and the District of Columbia, along with the support of tens of thousands of volunteers and spectators, will compete in 14 Olympic-type team and individual sports. The 2018 Special Olympics USA Games will celebrate the Special Olympics movement and its 50th anniversary; promote the ideals of acceptance and inclusion through sport; and showcase athletes from throughout the U.S. and the abilities of people with intellectual disabilities. The 2018 USA Games will also highlight Special Olympics' work in sport, education, health and community building.

For more information on the 2018 Special Olympics USA Games, please visit [SpecialOlympicsUSAGames.org](http://SpecialOlympicsUSAGames.org) and follow on Facebook ([@SpecialOlympicsUSAGames](https://www.facebook.com/SpecialOlympicsUSAGames)), Twitter ([@2018USAGames](https://twitter.com/2018USAGames)) and Instagram ([@SpecialOlympicsUSAGames](https://www.instagram.com/SpecialOlympicsUSAGames)).

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