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Special Olympics New Mexico advocate and Executive Director of The First Tee of San Juan County Thomas Yost named recipient of the Conrad Rehling Award

San Juan County, NM – Thomas Yost, who has been involved with Special Olympics New Mexico since 2007, has been honored as the 2018 Conrad Rehling Award recipient for his continued efforts to grow and support Special Olympics Golf in San Juan County, NM and beyond.

Thomas Yost has served as Executive Director of The First Tee of San Juan County, NM since 2005. With over 30 years of golf experience, Yost has a passion for junior golf and what it teaches and brings to youth in the community. Yost's involvement with Special Olympics New Mexico began in 2007 when he founded the San Juan Special Olympics Summer Program for Level 1 and Level 2 Special Olympics athletes at The First Tee. During the summer program, athletes learn golf fundamentals as well as learn golf rules and etiquette while playing on the course. Through The First Tee program, the athletes learn life skills and core values including respect, responsibility, honesty and perseverance.

"Tom helps us make wise decisions when we play golf and encourages us to not get mad when we miss our shot. He also coaches us to be able to make it closer next time," Ashli Thompson, Special Olympics New Mexico athlete said. "He helps us get stronger with our golfing skills. He teaches us everyday life skills through the game of golf."

A longtime supporter of Special Olympics, Yost was instrumental in bringing the Special Olympics New Mexico Area Competition and statewide Four Corners Invitational Competition to Riverside Golf Course, the home course of The First Tee of San Juan County. Thanks to Yost's efforts, Special Olympics New Mexico's athlete participation level and access to golf courses has grown.

"I can't think of a more worthy person for this award than Tom," said Dana Lehner, Executive Director of the Sun Country PGA. "As the Director of a membership association, I know I'm not supposed to have favorites. But, Tom is just that. He's the epitome of what a PGA Professional should be. It's not a surprise to me that the Special Olympics New Mexico would select him for this and it's been an honor to watch him constantly give back to the sport and people we all love."

Yost's advocacy and respect for Special Olympics athletes creates a ripple effect in the community promoting inclusion and breaking down barriers. Thomas Yost is a champion for all youth and for Special Olympics athletes in San Juan County and statewide.

About the Conrad Rehling Award

The Conrad Rehling Award, first presented in 2005, honors the late PGA Master Professional who followed a successful collegiate coaching career at Florida and Alabama by transforming his retirement into inspiring PGA Professionals to give back to the physically challenged. Rehling died in April 2007 at age 87.

The founding father of the Special Olympics Golf movement in 1988, Rehling spearheaded The PGA of America's efforts to introduce golf to Special Olympics. The Association and its 28,000 men and women professionals have dedicated countless hours, services and funding to the growth of Special Olympics Golf.

About The First Tee of San Juan County, NM

The First Tee is an international youth development organization introducing the game of golf and its inherent values to young people. Through after school and in school programs, we help shape the lives of young people from all walks of life by reinforcing values like integrity, respect and perseverance through the game of golf. And it's making a difference.

About Special Olympics New Mexico

Special Olympics New Mexico provides year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community. Today, Special Olympics New Mexico serves over 3,400 athletes, offering year-round training and competition in 12 sports. Special Olympics New Mexico is sponsored year-round and statewide by New Mexico Knights of Columbus, New Mexico Law Enforcement Torch Run, New Mexico True, French Funerals Cremations, Wells Fargo, HP, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Cumulus Media, Rudy's "Country Store And Bar-B-Q", 7-Eleven, and Blake's Lotaburger.

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