

About Special Olympics Texas

Special Olympics Texas is a privately funded non-profit organization, providing year-round sports training and athletics competition for 32,240 children and adults with intellectual disabilities in the Lone Star State. For more information about Special Olympics Texas, call 1.800.876.JOIN or visit www.specialolympicstexas.org.



Law Enforcement Torch Run



“I have found a new hero: the special athletes that demonstrate courage each time they take the field. As a Law Enforcement Torch Run officer, I have witnessed the rewards from our efforts on the face of every athlete, parent and coach at Summer Games.”

Lance Koppa
Highland Park
Department of Public Safety



Special Olympics
Texas

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Special Olympics Texas
7715 Chevy Chase Dr., Suite 120
Austin, Texas 78752
800.876.JOIN
Fax: 512.835.7756
www.specialolympicstexas.org



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History of the Torch Run

The Law Enforcement Torch Run (LETR) began in 1981 when Wichita Kansas Police Chief, Richard LaMunyon, saw an urgent need to raise funds and to increase awareness for Special Olympics. He conceived the idea of a Torch Run as a way to involve local law enforcement personnel in the community with Special Olympics.

The Torch Run expanded into seven states by 1985 (including Texas); 43 states by 1986; and 50 states and 30 nations in 1999.

Law enforcement officers in the U.S., Canadian Provinces and 34 countries carry the Flame of Hope through the streets of their towns and countries and deliver it to their local, state or national Special Olympics Games.

What is the LETR?

The Law Enforcement Torch is the largest grassroots fund raiser and public awareness vehicle for Special Olympics in the world.

At its most basic level, the Torch Run is an actual running event where officers and athletes run the Special Olympics "Flame of Hope" to Opening Ceremonies of local competitions, State, Provincial or National Summer, Winter or Fall Games. At its most extensive, the Torch Run program encompasses a variety of fundraising vehicles in addition to the actual Torch Run, such as t-shirt or merchandise sales, donations or pledges for runners in the Torch Run, corporate donations, and special events such as Polar Plunges, golf tournaments or other events that have community appeal.

The Law Enforcement Torch Run is not limited to just police departments. Sheriff's deputies, FBI agents, private prison and TDCJ corrections officers and personnel, district courts officers and fire department personnel are also involved on all levels of the Torch Run movement.

Texas Roots

In Texas, LETR has grown to become one of the largest in the world. To highlight Torch Run volunteers' efforts and the Special Olympics Texas program, 400-600 volunteers will carry the torch as much as 3,000 miles across Texas to present it at the Opening Ceremonies for the State Games. The support provided by this dedicated group has contributed greatly to programs in local Texas communities, which include more than 32,000 children and adults with intellectual disabilities.

The Texas Torch Run has raised over \$12 million for Special Olympics Texas since its inception in 1985, and to date more than 185 law enforcement agencies participate.



Torch Run Fundraising

Throughout Texas, Torch Run officers have conducted grassroots fund-raisers that include:

Golf Tournaments
Tip-A-Cop Events
Merchandise Sales
5K Runs

Polar Plunges
Bass Tournaments
Plane and Fire Engine Pulls
Cops on Top

Officers of the Law Enforcement Torch Run are committed to supporting Special Olympics Texas. Through their efforts, a scholarship fund is available to assist teams at the area level. Funds are used by teams to offset expenses incurred during participation in local, area and state competitions (i.e. equipment, uniforms, transportation, meals, etc.).

Why Get Involved?

- The image of law enforcement in many communities has been improved due to involvement with the Torch Run and Special Olympics Texas. Officers are seen as friends and people, rather than uniforms.
- Working with Special Olympics Texas through the Torch Run accomplishes many departments' community service goals by providing a helpful hand outside their regular law enforcement duties.
- Working with the Torch Run provides excellent positive media exposure through coverage of the Torch Run itself and the special fundraising events associated with Special Olympics Texas.
- Working with the Torch Run and for Special Olympics Texas provides personal fulfillment as well as departmental team achievements.
- Creating and managing fundraising events and public awareness campaigns for Special Olympics Texas requires time management, attention to detail and organizational skill. Potential leaders within the department can be identified and encouraged to develop their leadership skills.
- The Torch Run provides a common cause and bond for members of a department working shifts at various locations and times, and bonds officers with the larger brotherhood of law enforcement for a common cause.

How Do I Get Involved?

- Get in touch with Special Olympics Texas at 800.876.JOIN or www.specialolympicstexas.org.
- Contact Doug Ray, Senior Development Director – Torch Run, at dray@sotx.org or 214.943.9981.
- Follow SOTX online through Twitter, Facebook and Myspace.
- Sign up for the SOTX and LETR eNews on www.specialolympicstexas.org.