

Spring Edition 2016

The Guardian

The Newsletter of the Law Enforcement Torch Run® Executive Council

POLAR PLUNGE ®



Inside this issue:

<i>Chairman's Corner</i>	3
<i>Red Robin Hire Makes Athlete's Dream Come True</i>	4
<i>Why Do I Plunge: Special Olympics Georgia</i>	6
<i>Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics Iceland</i>	6-7
<i>Reflecting the Light of Special Olympics Athletes..Inspiring others to be "Just One More" in the Movement</i>	8-9
<i>Law Enforcement Torch Run International Conference, Phoenix, Arizona</i>	10-11
<i>2017 Austria Final Leg Torch Run</i>	12-16
<i>Law Enforcement Torch Run Super Plunge—Rhode Island</i>	17-18
<i>Badges on the Border</i>	19-20
<i>Thank You, Denny</i>	20
<i>Law Enforcement Torch Run Oklahoma</i>	21
<i>In Memorial</i>	22
<i>Law Enforcement Torch Run Texas</i>	23
<i>Run with Cops for Special Olympics Wisconsin</i>	24
<i>The Power of One More / Maddie Templeton-Special Olympics Athlete / Second Annual Germaine Casey Motorcycle Competition</i>	25
<i>Polar Plunge Louisiana Style</i>	26
<i>Polar Plunge Missouri / Polar Plunge Manitoba</i>	27
<i>Inaugural Vancouver Polar Plunge for Special Olympics British Columbia makes a big Splash</i>	28-29
<i>The Ultimate Plunge Experience</i>	30
<i>Polar Plunge Minnesota</i>	31
<i>Polar Plunge Ireland</i>	32
<i>Law Enforcement Torch Run Special Olympics Bharat</i>	33-35
<i>Polar Plunge Montreal</i>	36

Cover Photo: Connaught
Special Olympics, Ireland

Chairman's Corner

Torch Runners,

I am excited to welcome all of the possibilities of 2016 as we continue to celebrate and reflect upon the monumental success we achieved this past year. Our international reach continues to grow and is educating more and more people about the impact of Special Olympics and its importance for our communities. It is your passion that has made the partnership of law enforcement an overwhelming success for the movement!

Council continues to build upon the success in the Caribbean that we saw last year in the Bahamas with the development of more programs and extensive training. Torch Run Leadership will set the stage for our European programs this year in preparation to World Winter Games in Austria 2017 and seek new opportunities in Asia. All the while, we are seeking new partnerships through our affiliates program and preparing for another great conference in Phoenix, Arizona.

Not to be forgotten, this year will mark the 35th anniversary of the Law Enforcement Torch Run® (LETR). You should be proud to be a part of something that is changing lives and hearts throughout the world. I applaud your efforts and ask that you be a part of the momentum going forward, as it is dependent upon us to keep the "Flame of Hope" burning bright!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mike Peretti", enclosed within a large, stylized blue oval.

Lieutenant Mike Peretti (Ret.)
Chair, Law Enforcement Torch Run
Executive Council

Red Robin Hire Makes Athlete's Dream Come True—Athlete Profile

By: Jon Buzby, Special Olympics Delaware

Ever since she was a little girl, Rachel Rhea's favorite restaurant has always been Red Robin. So, when Special Olympics Delaware asked her if she'd be willing to volunteer as a hostess during the organization's annual Tip-A-Cop event at the Christiana Red Robin, Rachel was more than willing.

"I love their 'yum' food and the people there," Rachel, 21, explained. "My favorite meal is the bacon cheeseburger."

It didn't take long for the general manager and employees at the store to realize the personable and bubbly young lady had a knack for greeting people and making them feel welcome.



Red Robin Christiana employees left to right are Valerie Henry, Ashley Crossan, Rachel Rhea, Denni Durnall, Charlene Waters, and Kevin Drucker

"Our core values for all our employees are honor, integrity, seeking knowledge and having fun," store manager Denni Parrish explained. "Rachel showed all those core values within 10 minutes of being in the building."

It wasn't long afterward when Parrish approached Rachel with a part-time job offer as a weekend hostess.

"I was very excited when they offered me the job," Rachel said. "And then I started crying happy tears."

Like any parent would be, Rachel's mom, Pam, was ecstatic. But unlike many other parents, it was also an emotional experience for Pam, realizing the opportunity her daughter was getting to have a position where she is the first point of contact for customers.

"We are very grateful to Red Robin and Denni for giving Rachel the opportunity to work and feel like she has a purpose and is contributing to the community," Pam said.

The Christiana restaurant raised \$2,171 during the day-long Tip-A-Cop event held on October 24 when local police officers served as guest servers and athletes greeted customers. All tips to the officers were donated back to Special Olympics Delaware. A total of \$6,527 was raised by all three Delaware Red Robin restaurants. But just as importantly, so was awareness of the abilities of people with disabilities.

"The athletes bring such enthusiasm to the restaurant it genuinely makes you feel like you're part of something special," said Parrish, who has been part of seven Tip-A-Cop events. "I look forward to Rachel teaching myself, her team members and the guests that we are all the same no matter how different we are."

Rachel's first day was on November 1 and it was a resounding success.

"I enjoy meeting people," she shared. "And I love welcoming them to Red Robin!"

Why I Do the Plunge: Special Olympics Georgia

By: Batinna Thornhill, Special Olympics Georgia

I have been blessed to participate with Special Olympics Georgia for the last 18 years, and I am committed to being a part of this remarkable organization for many years to come. Sitting atop the local doughnut shop seemed a bit crazy and intimidating to both me and my family at first, and getting my nerve up to take the polar plunge into the 30 degree waters of Lake Lanier seemed a bit dreadful at first. But why do we take the plunge? We take the plunge for the athletes.

During those moments of winning, we each are empowered to understand that true victory isn't always dictated by who is the fastest, who jumps the highest, or who gets there first. We realize that the winners are those of us who are able to witness the courage and cheer on the bravery. On top of that, as witnesses of the tenacity of the athletes, our sons and our daughters become a little more tenacious themselves.



Cruel and Unusual Splashing- "Special Olympics Georgia's Executive Council Chair, John Clifton, starts splashing teammates after taking the Plunge the second time that day."



T Rex only gets a toe in- "Our T-Rex could only get her toes wet, but she still took the Plunge for Special Olympics Georgia Athletes!"

The motto of Special Olympics best describes why I have made this commitment to serve: "Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt." Bravery, courage, and perseverance: these are only a few words that describe the outstanding athletes who compete with Special Olympics Georgia. And when I realize that I can do my part to enable these winners, I, myself, win. Because they are brave enough to attempt to win, I am encouraged to be cuffed for a cause, and I win. I am motivated to be freezing for a reason at the Polar Plunge, and I win. And when I see the athletes cross the finish line, in spite of every obstacle with the bravery to attempt, I win.



Knumb Knights Take the Plunge- "The Knumb Knights from St. Benedict Catholic Church in Johns Creek, Georgia take the Plunge at Lake Lanier. They have taken the Plunge the last 6 years for Special Olympics Georgia Athletes!"



DJJ Team- "The Department of Juvenile Justice team stood out when they took the Plunge for Special Olympics Georgia Athletes!"

Law Enforcement Torch Run® for Special Olympics, Iceland

By: Gudmundur Sigurdsson, Special Olympics Iceland

Icelandic National Games 2015

On 30 May and 29 November 2015 the Law Enforcement Torch Run® for the Icelandic National Special Olympics Games in soccer took place in the capital and Reykjanesbaer, respectively.

Police officers and competitors ran 2 – 3 km with the torch in each event. Those competitors who did not run with the torch were waiting in the competition area. They were met at the field with applause and then all ran together one round in the stadium after which the fire was ignited by Flame of Hope.

The participation of the Icelandic police has drawn attention internationally, and Iceland participated in the Special Olympics European Games in Brussels in 2014 and the 2015 World Summer Games in California. I have since been invited to participate in the logistic team of the International Winter Games in Austria in March 2017, and I have accepted the invitation. Iceland has also been invited to send one police officer to participate in the Torch Run in the Winter Games and Detective Dadi Thorkelsson has been appointed to the role, and we congratulate him.



World Summer Games 2015

World Summer Games in Los Angeles 2015

It was incredibly rewarding to participate in the 2015 World Summer Games in Los Angeles. Many Special Olympics athletes attended the events (which were five to six each day) and spent time with their families, many of them with their prizes to show. They were so grateful that we were drawing attention to them. There are no contestants as loving, sincere, or honest as those in the Special Olympics. We were treated so well everywhere, and at every event, there were police officers, firefighters, musicians, singers, dancers, entertainers, gymnastics, bands, cheerleaders and athletes. It was very memorable when all parties ran together across the Golden Gate Bridge. It will not be repeated. We went to Disneyland, and I brought a little rain with me from Iceland, but we all had a good time. In Westminster, I was honored when I was handed



World Summer Games 2015

(Continued on page 7)



Soccer Game Between Police and Athletes

(Continued from page 6)

a key to the city after I spoke about my son and how Special Olympics has helped him. However, the most memorable moment was when we carried the Flame of Hope into the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum at the Opening Ceremony. We were not just to carry the Flame into the stadium, but we were also chosen to other assignments; the sweat, the bone pain, the smiles, the laughter, the tears, the hugs, the words of support from the athletes and our support for the Special Olympics. All this merged into the Flame as it was carried onto the stage that night - and we could not have been any prouder. If what we did led to one "lost" person getting involved in the Special Olympics - this was worth it.

Boccia and soccer.

I would also like to tell you about the fun tradition that I have established between the police force I work with and people with disabilities in the area. We regularly compete in boccia and football. This is major tournament that police have been offered to take part in and it is very exciting. It is very joyous for all involved. There are no prizes for victory in the tournament, but everyone share pizzas afterwards and has a good time.



Police playing boccia



Soccer Game Between Police and Athletes

Reflecting the Light of Special Olympics Athletes...Inspiring others to be “Just One More” in the movement — Torch Runner Profile

By: Melissa Hyatt, Special Olympics Maryland

I begin with a quote from Pulitzer Prize winning novelist Edith Wharton. “There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.”

Two words come to mind when I read that quote: hope and illumination.

2015 was a year that most of us won’t soon forget. It was a difficult period for law enforcement across the country.

Many in our profession and a large percentage of an agency filled with proud tradition began to feel more like villains than superheroes. The equilibrium surrounding our profession felt imbalanced, while national and local media painted a negative picture of our city.



While Baltimore struggled in April, our peers in law enforcement across the state and region offered support and assistance, and we saw real glimmers of hope. In June I began organizing our Baltimore Law Enforcement Torch Run® and T-shirt sale for the first time.

If the Baltimore Police Department failed at pulling together the Torch Run, it would be another disappointment in an already painful year.

A small team of people came together for the event. I was shocked by the willingness of those from other law enforcement agencies, private corporations, and local businesses to lend their unwavering support to our agency... yet again.

The Torch Run was magnificent. I was moved by the fact that our police officers and professional staff were smiling – they truly looked happy. As they engaged with the athletes, I saw a light in them that I thought had flickered out.

I was honored to attend the Law Enforcement Torch Run International Conference. I learned that the sense of camaraderie that I had felt with Maryland law enforcement during the unrest was even stronger in this LETR community.

The Polar Bear Plunge was approaching, and I decided to make an effort to pull together a Baltimore Police Department team. We strived to raise \$5,000, and I wasn’t sure if we’d be able to deliver.

I don’t think anyone had high expectations for us – many were likely just surprised that we were participating at all. Then, I watched a group of people in my department come together and raise over \$23,000. Our members left inspired. Next year, I have challenged each participant to recruit one more member to our team.

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

My focus here has been on what the Torch Run means to the Baltimore Police Department. It means focusing on an important cause for important people, rather than lamenting ourselves after a difficult year. It means paying forward the goodwill that others brought our way when we were in need.

When the calendar turned to 2016, the previous year wasn't forgotten. Our department is still recovering from a 2015 that didn't disappear. I took personal pride in the fact that this agency was able to get organized and motivated enough to do something awesome. Something that reminded us to be proud of being part of the Baltimore Police.

Edith Wharton's quote keeps coming to mind. "There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it."

Those of us in the law enforcement community strive to serve as the mirror to reflect the light in the courageous Special Olympics athletes.

They support us by spreading hope through inspiration, friendship, and appreciation. They intrinsically remind us to be committed to something more significant than ourselves or our vocations. Traditionally, police officers tend to be the heroes to other people. We pride ourselves on running in when dangerous circumstances warrant others running out.

I've learned though that the Special Olympics athletes are the true heroes in this relationship. We can all agree that their courage rivals any risks that we might take – these athletes are the bravest people that many of us have ever encountered. They remind us that there is hope. They remind us that there are truly good people that we serve in this world.

My pledge to Special Olympics athletes is to continue to be the mirror that reflects their light. As law enforcement, we have the influence and platform to support them and bring attention to how important Special Olympics is. By serving as the mirror, we will continue to work as a team to push forward the message of Special Olympics.



Law Enforcement Torch Run® International Conference Phoenix, Arizona, USA

By: Theresa Garagan, Vice-Chair ICPC

2016 Law Enforcement Torch Run International Conference – Phoenix Arizona USA

If you're willing to brave a little dust and tumbleweeds, Special Olympics Arizona is looking forward to seeing you where cowboys still ride the range, old-time saloons still serve the road-weary traveler, and where the Old West is still very much alive. But let's be honest - you're more likely to play golf, get a massage or sip cocktails than rope yourself a steer so get ready to trek back in time to the exciting days of the old west as the Law Enforcement Torch Run® International Conference heads to Phoenix, Arizona, Thursday, September 15 to Saturday, September 17, 2016 at the Sheraton Grand Phoenix in the heart of the downtown.

Conference Website

The conference website opened **Monday, March 18, 2016**, and all information regarding the conference hotel, schedule, important dates, events, activities, transportation, and recognition can be found on the LETR website by going to www.lettr.org and clicking on the Conference button at the top of the main page.

Conference Registration

Monday, April 11, 2016 12am EDT – LETR International Conference Registration opens and Early-bird registration fee of \$385.00 USD per person applies until Friday, June 10, 2016 5:00 PM EDT.

After 5:00pm EDT, the Regular Registration fee of \$435.00 USD per person applies until registration closes on Monday, August 1, 2016 5PM EDT

Arizona Host Night

Special Olympics Arizona is going to take you out to the ball game! Join us for an unforgettable evening at Chase Field as the AZ Diamondbacks take on the LA Dodgers Thursday night September 15. SOAZ has a very special night planned for you, starting off with an "Old-West" themed walk/parade through the heart of downtown Phoenix into the Arizona Diamondbacks stadium.

Come dressed in your best Old-Western attire and be welcomed and entertained along the way by dancers, cowboy groups, horses, carriage rides, marching band, and vendors highlighting Arizona's Old-West.

Attendees will also enjoy a great evening of baseball, including exclusive game experiences: Heroes Parade on the infield, opportunities to meet former players, on-field recognition, law enforcement singing national anthem, law enforcement throwing out first pitch, and a pre-game Diamondbacks festival outside stadium. Each attendee will receive a free ticket that includes \$25 for food & drink in the ballpark that night.

Torch Run

Join fellow Torch Runners from around the world for an early morning 5K run through the heart of downtown Phoenix, Saturday, September 17th. This event will be done in group cadence fashion and is not a timed running event. A shorter (3K) route for walkers that still lets you experience the sights of the Phoenix downtown will be incorporated into this event for those who do not wish to run but still want to participate. Starting at Chase Field, participants will make a 3.2 mile (5K) loop through the business and historical districts of downtown Phoenix, along the way passing Talking Sticks Arena Resort, the high rise CityScape Towers, Phoenix Police

(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

Department and Police Museum before stopping briefly to take a group photo in front of Wesley Bolin Memorial Plaza and the State Capitol and returning to Chase Field.

Unified Sports®

Special Olympics Arizona invites you to an incredible unified basketball & cheer experience where you'll be partnered on teams and play with Special Olympics Arizona athletes at the home of the NBA Phoenix Suns & WNBA Phoenix Mercury. This is a no-cost event open to all conference attendees. Activities will include: basketball skills clinic, shootout, and cheerleading skills clinic all ending in a championship unified game. All attendees are highly encouraged to come dressed in your most creative player/team costume for the contest! Food and drink will be available for purchase inside the arena from various vendors.

Arizona Featured Athletes

Chy Johnson is an exceptional and inspiring young lady. Involved in the Special Olympics for over 12 years now, competing in bowling, basketball, Bocce ball to name a few events she has too many medals to count.

Kevin McGee & Austin Rector – Kevin is an athlete and Global Messenger to Belize who has been involved with Special Olympics for nearly six years. Austin is his Unified Sports® partner and coach with a story of his own.

David Frohme joined Special Olympics in 1978. He was the first ever Special Olympics athlete to run in the Boston marathon. He is a Global Messenger and at 52 years old competes in track and field, basketball, swimming and snowshoeing.

I.A.C.P. Photo Contest

The I.A.C.P. is again extending the opportunity and invitation to all LETR programs to submit their Torch Run photos for this contest. The winners will be announced during the I.A.C.P. Founders Luncheon at the Law Enforcement Torch Run International Conference in Phoenix, Arizona, Thursday, September 15, 2016. Contest rules and instructions can be found by going to the LETR website www.lettr.org and clicking on the "Conference" button at the top of the main page and clicking on the Awards & Recognition tab.



2017 Austria Final Leg Torch Run

by: John Newnan, Final Leg Team Captain

The marquee event in the world of Special Olympics will take place in Austria in March 2017. The 2017 Special Olympics World Winter Games provides an incredible opportunity for athletes from over 170 countries to travel to Austria to embrace the Olympic ideal, display their talents and abilities, and to compete against other athletes from around the world. It will undoubtedly be an amazing and historic event that will leave an indelible mark on everyone associated with the World Games!

As an important part of the World Games, the Law Enforcement Torch Run Final Leg® for Special Olympics will heighten awareness and take the message of Special Olympics to every corner of Austria. Law Enforcement officials and Special Olympics athletes, unified together as a part of the Final Leg Team, will serve as true Guardians of the Flame™ and promote the powerful messages of inclusion, acceptance, and ability every step of the Final Leg journey to promote the 2017 World Winter Games.

Starting in Bregenz, Austria on March 9, 2017, the Final Leg Team will run through all nine Austrian provinces participating in over 45 ceremonies in cities, towns and communities along the way before ending in Schladming on March 18th safely delivering the Flame of Hope to the waiting hands of the athletes at Opening Ceremonies.

The 2017 Austria Final Leg Team consists of 133 members:

- Law Enforcement Runners—(88)
- Athlete Runners—(10)
- Running Team Leaders—(10)
- Council Logistics Team Members (8)
- Austria Logistics Team Members—(9)
- Documentation Crew—(3)
- Route Leaders (4) *Co-Leaders for each Route Council/Austria*
- Final Leg Team Captain—(1)

A review/selection committee consisting of Law Enforcement Torch Run and Special Olympics program representatives met in the beginning of March to discuss and selected ten (10) Special Olympics athletes to be a part of the Final Leg Team from a pool of thirty (36) athletes who had been nominated. The decisions were extremely difficult as each and every one of the nominees were remarkable.

We are often asked how the athletes are selected to be a part of the Final Leg Team. As a part of our decision making process we wanted to ensure that as a global movement we have international representation and we looked at programs that had never had the opportunity to

have an athlete as a member of a Final Leg Team or how many times an athlete has been selected from a particular program for a Final Leg in the past. One of our main goals is to provide opportunities to as many programs and athletes as possible.

We reviewed the nomination forms submitted for each athlete and all of the pertinent information provided by the nominator regarding each athlete and their involvement in Special Olympics as well as any involvement in their local Torch Run programs. I can tell you that every member of the selection committee was emotionally drained after this arduous process, as the athletes were all so incredible. Unfortunately, we could not select all 36 athletes, we could only select 10.

We are proud to announce the ten athletes selected for participation in the unified 2017 Austria Final Leg:

Ariel Ary	Costa Rica	Albert Masser	Austria
Amanda Bammann	Colorado, USA	Francis Mauro	Gibraltar
Michael Heup	Maryland, USA	Andrew Negrelli	Victoria, Australia
Mandy Manzardo	British Columbia, Canada	Dawn Ruhlman	South Dakota, USA
Hermann Marte	Austria	Timothy Zavarelli	Montana

Congratulations to all of the athletes! These great athletes will lead, inspire and motivate us on our Final Leg mission! *And now for the rest of the team.....*

TEAM CAPTAIN

John Newnan Maryland, USA

ROUTE LEADERS

Don Stuart	NSW, Australia	Paul Manuel	Alberta, Canada
Adi Reiter	Austria	Markus Glössl	Austria

RUNNING TEAM LEADERS

Bob Cormier	New Hampshire USA	Jimmy Johnson	Alaska, USA
Kristine Crosman	Massachusetts, USA	Allen Jones	Georgia, USA
Gary Gordon	Republic of Ireland	Alan Keane	NSW, Australia
Mark Harrison	New Zealand	Bill Proll	Southern California, USA
Nancy Howell	Newfoundland & Labrador, Canada	June Worden	New York, USA

COUNCIL LOGISTICS TEAM

Bill Buford	Arkansas, USA	David Smith	Northern Ireland
Mike Peretti	Northern California, USA	Lisa Smith	Delaware, USA
Tory Rivers	SO International	Michelle Ugalde	New Mexico, USA
Gummi Sigurdsson	Iceland	Scott Whyte	NSW, Australia

AUSTRIA LOGISTICS TEAM

Walter Buchegger	Christian Renner
Gerhard Lusskandl	Kerstin Schwaiger
Englebert Oschounig	Franz Supanic
Franz Recker	Peter Unterthurner
Karl Reinisch	

COUNCIL DOCUMENTATION TEAM

Harry Drucker	Southern California, USA	Tommy Walker	Indiana, USA
Frank Tewey	Maryland, USA		

TORCH RUNNERS

UNITED STATES

Kevin Arthaud	North Dakota	Mark Koeller	Missouri
Lee Barrett	South Carolina	Adam Kraatz	Arizona
Steve Barrow	Florida	Eric Leclerc	Rhode Island
George Beaudry	Alabama	Paul Mangus	Hawaii
Daniel Blagg	North Carolina	Moe McClanahan	Virginia
Jeff Boston	Nebraska	Mark McCorkle	Southern California
James Browning	Kansas	Bruce Merriam	Vermont
Garth Burnside	Michigan	Paul Montray	New Hampshire
Patrick Calley	Idaho	Niki Nelson	Wisconsin
Cassidee Carlson	Colorado	James Pittman	Louisiana

Neil Case	New York	Matt Porter	Pennsylvania
John Clifton	Georgia	Anne Ralston	Ohio
Art Collins	Montana	Steve Rehorst	South Dakota
Don Crabtree	Connecticut	Dennis Reilly	Illinois
Greg Dawson	Arkansas	Jeff Rullman	Iowa
Darren Derby	Massachusetts	Michael Samp	Wyoming
Toni Duncan	Maryland	Joe Sarnoski	New Jersey
Trevor Ford	Kentucky	Pete Sawyer	Delaware
Michael Gilbert	Nevada	Mikeal Suniga	Washington
Aaron Glymph	New Mexico	Kecia Weaver	Oregon
Tim Jeanetta	Minnesota	Barry Wilson	Alaska
Phill Jones	Maine	Dan Winter	Northern California

CANADA

Jody Armstrong	Ontario	Tom Norton	British Columbia
James Couvier	Manitoba	Katrina O'Reilly	Alberta
Shawn Dulude	Quebec	Scott Stevenson	Prince Edward Island
Sam McInnis	New Brunswick		

INTERNATIONAL

St Clair Amory	British Virgin Islands	Wendy O'Neill	Queensland
Nikolas Angelakis	Greece	Hans Ortner	Austria
Gosford Cole	Jamaica	Lo Hyun Park	Korea
Miriam Eggar	Austria	Peter Perl	Austria
Alison Fahey	New South Wales	Petros Petrou	Cyprus
Aaron Ferguson	Belize	Orlando Pyle	Trinidad & Tobago
Michael Fung	Hong Kong	Peter Read	New Zealand
Pepe Gilbert	Gibraltar	Melanie Rettenbacher	Austria
Gavin Hegarty	Ireland	Christian Schöberl	Austria

Gerhard Hochstrasser	Austria	Aleš Suhadolnik	Slovenia
Geoffrey Kamworor	Kenya	Terrico Sweeting	Bahamas
Bertram Kieln	Austria	Dadi Thorkelsson	Iceland
Heinz Kirchner	Austria	Randall Umaña	Costa Rica
Steve Lin	Chinese Taipei	Pieter Vermeulen	Netherlands
Peter Linsbauer	Austria	Andy Watson	Northern Ireland
Petr Matlach	Czech Republic	Nicole Williams	Victoria

Our Final Leg Team consists of Torch Runners from forty-three (43) U.S. states, seven (7) Canadian provinces and territories, four (4) Australian states and twenty-six (26) other countries from around the world. As we continue to grow our Torch Run movement to benefit Special Olympics around the world, we are tremendously excited that we have first time Final Leg Torch Run participation from six (6) new countries:

Antigua & Barbuda

Belize

British Virgin Islands

Costa Rica

Kenya

Slovenia

CONGRATULATIONS to all of the selected runners and athletes on the Final Leg Team!

The 2017 Austria Final Leg website has more information on the upcoming event including pictures of all of the team members, information about the Final Leg and the Games. Additionally, pictures will be posted daily to the website during the event so you can follow along! Please visit the website at www.lettr-finalleg.org

Law Enforcement Torch Run® Super Plunge — Rhode Island

By: Tracy J. Garabedian, Special Olympics Rhode Island

In 2007 the Rhode Island Torch Run committee wanted to come up with a signature Law Enforcement Torch Run® fundraiser. Seeing how successfully plunges have been, they decided to do a plunge in March when the water was the coldest. The first year the plunge raised over \$5,500. Michael Walter who is a Special Olympics athlete was the top fundraiser raising \$1,100. Walker quickly became the face of the Torch Run plunge, and with his efforts he exceeded his own personal goals every year helping the plunge to grow. As the plunge continued to grow, the location of the plunge was changed to accommodate more people.

Ken Ledo introduced an idea that he took back from a LETR International Conference. He wanted to add Super Plunge, one-plunge-an-hour for 24 hours, to the already successfully plunge. At first, people thought the idea was insane. They thought a Super Plunge in New England when the water temperature is in the low 30's would not be possible or that people would not want to be involved. Maryland had established a successful Super Plunge event, but there were initially concerns about the ability to find corporate sponsors in a state as small as Rhode Island where many businesses were already supporting Special Olympics Rhode Island (SORI) in some financial capacity.

In 2013 Chief Elwood Johnson decided to bring the Super Plunge to life. A month before the plunge he made up his mind and decided to make a spark by attempting to complete a Super Plunge. He thought at the very least, it would raise awareness for Special Olympics athletes as a living, breathing event that ran for 24 hours over an entire weekend. He borrowed a neighboring community's police mobile command center and headed to the plunge site with only swim suits, a flashlight and his cell phone to document each plunge. Chief Johnson started plunging on March 9th. He had several supporters visiting him through the day to keep him inspired. As darkness settled in, he had less and less visitors. The air temperature kept falling and Chief Johnson soon found himself alone, cold, wet and isolated on the darkened beach. The secret inspiration was that he dedicated his plunge to an athlete, Charlie Kolb, to help make it more personal, not just for himself, but for the public. Chief Johnson, like most volunteers, recognized that Special Olympics is not a building or a single athletic competition.... It is about people with intellectual disabilities. It is about a neighbor, a friend, and child. He had a T-shirt made up with the touching image of Charlie Kolb on the front, and the words, "This one's for Charlie" on the back. It put a face on Special Olympics, and Charlie helped personalize the event while representing over 2,800 SORI athletes, all of whom had been a source of inspiration to him.



Chief Elwood Johnson when he was the 1st and only Super Plunger wearing his "Charlie" shirt to whom his plunge was dedicated.

Chief Johnson later joked that he was so delirious and lonely in the wee hours of the night that he was visited by the spirits of dead relatives, "Yes, Grandma?" During the early morning hours, the sun began to brighten up the dark sky and Chief Johnson got his second wind. Now, more and more people came down to visit. Some visitors were simply following their normal weekend routine walking their dog along the water front and approached him with perplexed expressions. Within a few minutes, the stranger was enlightened on Special Olympics, and why someone would do something so difficult for other people. On Sunday March 10th at noon, Chief Johnson made his final plunge by leading the way for the 6th Annual Torch Run Plunge.

Chief Johnson proved a Super Plunge was possible in New England, and he alone raised over \$8,000. During the after party Chief Johnson was approached by two veteran SORI volunteers and long-time plungers, Jim Cummings and Bo Mathews. They asked if they could join him the next year. The following year as the three plungers were making plans for the next Super Plunge Chief Johnson was contacted by Eric Leclerc (Cranston PD), who had just returned from a deployment in Afghanistan. Eric asked if he could join the team. The 2014 team was now formed and they adopted the motto of, "4 Men, 24 Hours, 96 Plunges, and 1 Super Cause." The 2014 Super Plunge Team raised over \$33,000.

(Continued on page 18)

(Continued from page 17)

As the Super Plunge was growing, the number of participants in the Torch Run Plunge kept growing as well, and a second plunge was added. Due to the involvement of middle and high school students through Project Unify, an additional plunge was added to the weekend. This has helped to broaden the awareness of SORI and promote tolerance and acceptance of people with intellectual disabilities in RI school systems and beyond. The Project Unified plunge took place on Saturday prior to the Super Plunge, like the match that lit a 24-hour fuse that ends with the grand finale, Torch Run Plunge.

Following the successful Super Plunge of 2014, Firefighter Rick Labreche (Woonsocket Fire Department) asked if he could join the team for the 2015 Super Plunge. The 2015 team was set however, Mother Nature intervened and the plunge had to be postponed due to the heavy icing that covered the bay with thick snow-covered ice. Due to the severe weather, the plunge location was changed to the open ocean in Galilee (Narragansett) Rhode Island. Once again, the popularity and fundraising grew, and five (5) Super Plungers raised over \$44,500.

The annual event had created a buzz in Rhode Island, and enthusiasm grew throughout the year. Near the end of 2015, four (4) additional volunteers joined the 2016 Super Plunge team growing the team to a total of nine (9). They included Chief Bill Ziehl, Foster PD; Diogo Mello, Detective Sergeant, with the East Providence PD; Matt Laythe, Department of Corrections, and Anne LaRocco, Department of Corrections and the first female Super Plunger in RI. The 2016 Super Plunge team had grown to nine. The Super Plunge took place over March 19 to the 20, 2016, and the team of nine (9) almost doubled the previous year's fundraising total, at over \$83,000. The entire "Freezing for a Reason" weekend raised over \$151,000. The spark that Chief Johnson created four years earlier had grown into a fire, which is symbolically protected by the Guardians of the Flame. Rhode Island has already networked with their Region 1 partners in New England, and they plan to host a Region 1 Super Plunge with one member from each New England Torch Run program to join Rhode Island's Super Plunge Team in 2017. The weather forecast for 2017 is too far off to be known, but this is a certainty, Rhode Island's Torch Run/Super Plunge weekend in March will grow exponentially, spreading camaraderie, good will, and the message that Special Olympics changes the lives of people with intellectual disabilities, and they in turn change the lives of those who are inspired by their example.



2016 Super Plunge Team Members

Badges on the Border

By: Erin McCartan, Special Olympics New York

2016 will mark the 2nd Annual Badges on the Border Torch Run leg that unifies the Torch Run efforts between the United States and Canada to benefit the athletes of Special Olympics (SO). What began as a unique idea between two communities is quickly growing into an international event. The American side of the run starts in Goat Island, NY, travels through Niagara Falls and ends in the middle of the Rainbow Bridge, uniting with athletes and members of the Law Enforcement Torch Run® from Canada to light the cauldron. Two nations, two Law Enforcement Torch Run Programs, two torches coming together for one cause—to raise much needed funds and awareness for Special Olympics.

When this Torch Run leg came to fruition, it surpassed any and all hopes and expectations. "What started out as a symbolic unification of the Bi-National Flame of Hope evolved into a more impactful moment once the NY and Canadian Torch Runs meet at the international line on the bridge. It started once the gift exchange between athletes of the two neighboring countries occurred. The athletes began to proudly display their medals and describe their favorite sports to their new found friends from another country. It didn't take long for the Torch Runners and SO staff to quickly realize that we were a part of something much bigger than just a Torch Run; it was an international unification of friends." -Major Steven Nigrelli, New York State Police, New York State Torch Run Director.

This International Torch Run has quickly gained notoriety and curiosity. In 2015, about 100 officers were involved in this Leg. This year we are expecting a total of at least 400 runners to unite on the Rainbow Bridge. "We are extremely excited to be holding the Badges on the Border Torch Run again this year with our brothers and sisters from Canada. This leg is especially meaningful for us all because it shows the solidarity law enforcement has on both sides of the border for this worthy cause in showing support for the Special Olympics." -Jeff Wilson, Deputy Patrol Agent in Charge United States Border Patrol, Western New York Regional Torch Run Director.

What started as a small, ceremonial Torch Run between New York State and Canada, has quickly spread across the world. An officer from the 914th SFS, originally from Niagara Falls, is currently stationed in Kuwait and after participating in previous Torch Runs, he is currently hoping to model a similar Torch Run while overseas during his deployment.



Law Enforcement and athletes come together to light the cauldron in the middle of the Rainbow International Bridge.

(Continued from page 19)

On June 14, 2016, Torch Runners from the United States and Canada will run in unity, carrying the Flame of Hope in support of Special Olympics athletes. Badges on the Border serves as a reminder to us all that despite everything else going on in the world, that the Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics breaks down barriers, dispels stereotypes and encourages inclusion across all borders.

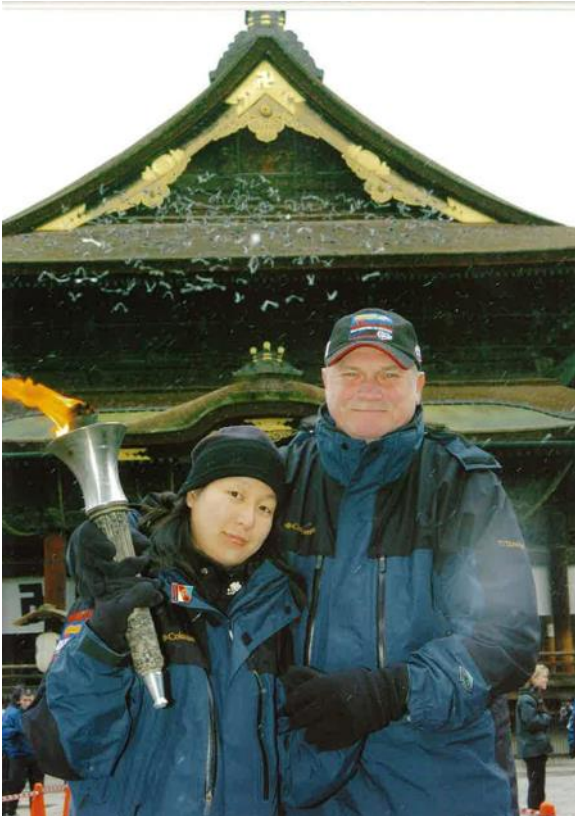
For more information on how to participate in the Badges on the Border Torch Run leg, contact Erica Raeppe, Special Olympics NY- Western Region at eraeppe@nyso.org or (716)580-3824.



New York State Law Enforcement and NY Special Olympic athletes at Niagara Falls, USA

Thank You, Denny

By: Julie A. Drake, Special Olympics Wisconsin



Thank you for keeping the Flame of Hope burning brightly for the athletes of Special Olympics! On behalf of the entire Law Enforcement Torch Run® and Special Olympics family, we want to share our deepest appreciation for Denny's tireless and steadfast leadership. Denny will retire on July 1, 2016. If you'd like to send him a note you can reach him at dalldridge@specialolympicswisconsin.org.

Congratulations Denny!

Law Enforcement Torch Run® Special Olympics Oklahoma Turns 30!

By: Jennifer Lightle, Special Olympics Oklahoma

This year more than 150 different law enforcement agencies in Oklahoma will carry the Flame of Hope in to mark the 30th Anniversary of the Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics Oklahoma! This landmark event will happen on May 11, 2016. We are one of a few in the United States among programs that have reached the 30 year mark. The Lt Governor and Attorney General for the state of Oklahoma will be there to kick off the Oklahoma City leg of the torch heading to the state games in Stillwater, Oklahoma.



Special Olympics Oklahoma Athlete, Chris Paynter, Lt. Governor Todd Lamb, and Attorney General Scott Pruitt

Oklahoma Polar Plunge® 2016

By: Jennifer Lightle, Special Olympics Oklahoma

Taking the plunge and changing lives is what Oklahomans did this past winter—running into a freezing body of water—maybe wearing a costume, maybe wearing just a swimsuit—submerging themselves in completely and then racing back out again with a brand new layer of icicles. Some might call that insanity. For the past 14 years, however, Special Olympics Oklahoma has called it the Polar Plunge.

What started with one plunge has now grown to 15 locations across the state. For those more sensitive to insanely cold temperatures, there is also the Too Chicken to Plunge option, where people can raise the \$75 minimum and take advantage of everything the event offers without having to brave the freezing water. The polar plunges in Oklahoma had over 1,045 plungers fling themselves into freezing water to raise a cool \$240,000 in 2016.



Oklahoma City Polar Plunge—Oklahoma Police Department—the Green Machine team!

IN MEMORIAL

Chief Floyd Simpson, Corpus Christi (TX) Police Department

Corpus Christi Police Chief Floyd Simpson died in an off-duty motorcycle crash in early 2015 and Special Olympics Texas received many monetary gifts honoring his memory. Before his death, Chief Simpson had served as one of the State Co/Directors on the Law Enforcement Torch Run® Executive Committee. On the local level, he helped transform the Area 2 Law Enforcement Torch Run into a vital group, and his legacy still stands there. We have been amazed and humbled by the support of Chief Simpson's many admirers and friends—they raised more \$39,800 in his memory. We are forever grateful!



Chief Floyd Simpson loved carrying the torch with Special Olympics Texas athletes. This photo was taken only a week before he died in an off-duty motorcycle crash.

Galveston Polar Plunge

By: Tela Mange, Special Olympics Texas

Special Olympics Texas supporters across the Houston metropolitan area traveled to Galveston in January 2016 to brave the chilly waters of the Gulf of Mexico. More than 300 intrepid plungers raised more than \$47,170 in the event's sixth year. The Galveston event is the largest one in Texas.



Members of the Brazoria County Peace Officers Association had a blast at the Polar Plunge. (This is a "before" photo.)

Rangers SS Elvis Andrus Supports LETR for Texas

By: Tela Mange, Special Olympics Texas



Texas Rangers shortstop Elvis Andrus carries a heart for Special Olympics Texas before the game-time presentation of his donation.

Texas Rangers shortstop Elvis Andrus, a long-time supporter of the Law Enforcement Torch Run® and Special Olympics Texas hosted an event in December for the Young Athletes Program and families in the Fort Worth area. Andrus interacted with the young athletes (ages 2-7), ate dinner with them and then donated \$4,500 to support the Young Athletes Program. Back in May, Andrus had donated \$5,000 to support the SOTX Summer Games in Arlington.

Run with Cops for Special Olympics Wisconsin

By: Julie A. Drake, Special Olympics Wisconsin

This year, beginning in April and taking place throughout September and October, law enforcement officers will join their local communities across the state for Run with the Cops events. This one-of-a-kind night run brings together the community, law enforcement and Special Olympics Wisconsin. Last year these events, held in seven communities across Wisconsin, raised more than \$65,000 with nearly 1,500 runners participating!

Law enforcement agencies work collaboratively with Special Olympics staff and 100% of the funds raised benefit Special Olympics Wisconsin athletes. In 2014, the run was held in four communities raising more than \$25,000 and participant numbers topped 1,000. This year the number of planned runs has increased to nine locations throughout the state with hopes of raising more than \$85,000 for the athletes.

Run with the Cops offers an amazing course lit at every turn with police and emergency vehicle lights. The night sky is also lit by participants with flashing pins, light up necklaces and Glow Stations along the course. Officers in full uniform run with participants to the police tape finish line. Then it's time for crazy selfies in the jail cell. Prior to the run participants and spectators have the opportunity to see law enforcement vehicles up close and ask questions as they interact with local, county, state and corrections officers. Each run can be individualized to the community/campus it is being held and includes fun for all ages and all sized communities with kids/police obstacle courses.

This was the most engaged, positive, fun interaction that my staff and local city police department and county deputies had with UW-Stout students. They are still talking about it and sharing pictures and stories," says UW-Stout Police Chief Lisa Walter who brought the concept of Run with the Cops to Wisconsin in 2013. This



event builds positive partnerships with local law enforcement while also raising funds for nearly 10,000 children and adults with intellectual disabilities.

Wisconsin Rapids Police Chief Kurt Heuer hosted his first ever Run with the Cops in 2015 and is amazed at the continued good will and enhanced engagement as a result of the event. "Run with the Cops for Special Olympics Wisconsin exceeded my expectations and the community engagement was phenomenal!"

We encourage you to bring this fun, community policing event to your state. Officers can get involved by joining the event planning committees, bringing squad cars or other vehicles to the events, running in uniform or helping with event logistics and set-up. Contact Chief Lisa Walter at WalterL@uwstout.edu or visit www.RunwithCops.org for more information on how to start one of these in your local programs.

The Power of One More

By: Luke Schulte, Special Olympics Kansas

When Kansas Law Enforcement Torch Run Executive Council Member and Topeka Police Department Detective Kristi Powell sets a goal to increase awareness and funds through the Topeka, KS Polar Plunge, she works from the mantra, "One more!" For 2016, she can count several "one mores"! With many more coming in 2017!

Kristi began working with Topeka City Manager Jim Colson in early fall 2015 to engage his office and employees to plunge in the icy waters of Lake Shawnee. He not only agreed to ask his staff to plunge, but set a personal fundraising goal of \$5,000 to show his support of the Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics Kansas. This goal served as motivation to his staff to fundraise and participate right beside him.

Dressed up as Superheroes for Special Olympics, he proudly took the Polar Plunge in Topeka as the highest fundraising individual, with the City of Topeka staff earning bragging rights as the highest fundraising team! Together, they raised over \$7,500! They were presented with these honors at a City Hall meeting where City Manager Colson proceeded to challenge all departments in the City of Topeka to join the fun in 2017!

To watch the presentation made by Kristi and Josh, please visit this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zTGEbKLPPaw>.

Maddie Templeton—Special Olympics Athlete

By: Debbie Sumrall, Special Olympics Alabama

Here is a heartwarming picture of Shelby County, Alabama athlete Maddie Templeton. Maddie is a senior this year and on March 23, 2016 she competed for the last time as a student athlete in the wheelchair race. After the race, her father proudly told torch runners, Maddie finally won gold in the race she has courageously competed in every year. Pictured alongside of her are LETR volunteers from Shelby County Sheriff's Office, Sergeant Shelby O'Connor, Lieutenant Mark Bishop, and Deputy Debbie Sumrall. Way to go, Maddie!



Second Annual LETR Germaine Casey Motorcycle Competition raises over \$27,000 for Special Olympics New Mexico

By: Oscar Solis, Special Olympics New Mexico

[Rio Rancho, NM] - On March 11 & 12, Law Enforcement Torch Run® Rio Rancho Police Department's Motor Unit hosted over 40 law enforcement motor officers for the 2nd annual LETR Germaine Casey Motorcycle Training and Competition, which raised over \$27,000 for Special Olympics New Mexico.

LETR RRPD used the event to primarily help motor officers hone their skills, as well as provide awareness and fundraising for Special Olympics New Mexico. LETR Rio Rancho Police Dept.'s (RRPD) Motor Unit teamed up once again with Intel to make this event a big success and a huge community event—drawing the likes of Rio Rancho Mayor Greg Hull, RRPD Chief Mike Geier, and Albuquerque PD Chief Gorden Eden. Last year, the event raised \$8,000 for Special Olympics New Mexico.



LETR Rio Rancho PD officer Ben Sanchez makes a tight turn during the 2nd annual LETR Germaine Casey Motorcycle Training and Competition for Special Olympics NM. RRPD took first place in the team division.

Click [HERE](#) to see photos from the event.

Polar Plunge Louisiana Style

By: Lexie Grush, Special Olympics Louisiana

This year's Polar Plunge, benefitting Special Olympics Louisiana, has proved to be yet another successful event, with over 30 registered teams. Community members, Special Olympics athletes and law enforcement officials from around the state came out to Cabela's this past weekend to participate in the fundraising event.



Polar Plunge Flip!

Ascension Parish Sheriff's Office (APSO), was once again the top fundraising agency for the Plunge. The department surpassed its goal of \$20,000 by raising \$37,667 from law enforcement officers, business, organizations, schools and community members throughout the Parish. Major Ward Webb raised the most from the Sheriff's Office. His goal was to raise \$15,000; instead he more than doubled his goal with raising over \$32,000.

Webb was awarded for his dedication to the Law Enforcement Torch Run Movement with the Above & Beyond award for 2013 and the Top Fundraiser award for 2014 and 2015.

"He does his role as a law enforcement torch run officer, but he takes it to the next level, and he is always willing to go above and beyond for the Special Olympics," said Special Olympics



Polar Plunge Officers take the Plunge!

Louisiana Director of Internal Communications and Marketing Casey Minton.

Webb serves as the Vice Chair for the Law Enforcement Torch Run for Louisiana and is on the planning committee for the International Law Enforcement Torch Run annual conference. Webb is also in charge of all Special Olympics events through the Sheriff's Office.

"I see a lot of younger and older children with intellectual disabilities that need our assistance," Webb said. "It came to light with my sheriff back when his granddaughter was born with Down Syndrome. It kind of opened our eyes to the need to help those that are less fortunate than us and that need more assistance than us. The more we can fund, the more we can help. It's just close to my heart and truly close to Sheriff Wiley's heart."

Webb will be honored at the Special Olympics Sports Awards Ceremony on May 20 at the State Summer Games Patron's Reception in Hammond.



Athlete after plunge!

Special Olympics Missouri with our LETR partners hosted 14 Polar Plunges over 6 weeks this winter. There were 4,113 plungers in the water and they raised over \$972,000 for our 15,000 athletes.

POLAR



PLUNGE®



MISSOURI



LIMITED SPOTS AVAILABLE REGISTER TODAY!



2016 THE ULTIMATE POLAR PLUNGE

CHURCHILL
MANITOBA • CANADA
June 30 - July 2, 2016

ManitobaLETR.CA

Pledge individually or as a team.
REGISTER TODAY
and start fundraising now.

Check our website for all the details of this thrillin' and chillin' 3-day
plunge experience
and get ready to venture into Hudson Bay!





LAW ENFORCEMENT TORCH RUN FOR SPECIAL OLYMPICS MANITOBA

Special Olympics Manitoba

Inaugural Vancouver Polar Plunge for Special Olympics British Columbia makes a BIG splash

By: Eliot James, Special Olympics British Columbia

The sun shone but the sea was frigid as law enforcement members and other brave souls got bold and cold at the first-ever Polar Plunge® for Special Olympics British Columbia in Vancouver, British Columbia (BC).

The 2016 Polar Plunge, staged in partnership with the BC Law Enforcement Torch Run®, drew 90 Plungers to get “freezin’ for a reason” on March 5.

Law enforcement agencies took the Plunge alongside teams, businesses, and individuals in what may well be the start of a winter tradition. Participants raised more than \$30,000 for SOBC, and the Vancouver Police Department took the prize for top law enforcement fundraising team.

“Once the teeth stopped chattering, we realized how much fun this was and how much money we were able to raise for Special Olympics,” VPD Insp. and BC LETR Executive member Howard

Chow said. “The costumes, the hard work from the planning committee, and the support from the public and law enforcement community all contributed to the event’s incredible success. Thank you to everyone for taking part. I hope to see everyone shivering beside me at the 2nd annual Polar Plunge!”

Guests of all ages had fun checking out police department operations vehicles, along with the VPD mounted, marine, and canine units on display. Teams of VPD cadets and SOBC athletes roved the beach raising awareness and accepting donations.



BC Lions quarterback Travis Lulay and Vancouver Police Department members get bold and cold at Vancouver’s first Polar Plunge. Photo credit: Doug Bower

BC Lions quarterback Travis Lulay, a local celebrity and longtime Special Olympics supporter, and national women’s soccer team players Emily Zurrer and Selenia Iacchelli got in the game to Plunge.

A dozen colourful characters in the costume contest posed onstage for a cheering crowd, with VPD Chief Adam Palmer serving as one of the keen-eyed judges.

At the call to Plunge, spectators crowded the shore as the law enforcement contingent, fully dressed, assembled behind a VPD bagpiper for a ceremonial send-off. Local law enforcement chiefs and agency members led the charge into frigid waters, followed by a cast of superheroes, celebrities, and kooky characters running,



Metro Vancouver Transit Police Deputy Chief and BC LETR Executive member Barry Kross prepares for the first-ever Vancouver Polar Plunge. Photo credit: Doug Bower



Law enforcement agencies including the Vancouver, West Vancouver, and Abbotsford police departments and Metro Vancouver Transit Police lead the inaugural Polar Plunge. Photo credit: Robert McDonald

(Continued on page 29)

(Continued from page 28)

splashing, and laughing in the chilly water.

The crowd of participants and passersby were treated to an inspiring Opening Ceremony speech by SOBC athlete Michaela Robinson.

“On behalf of myself and all Special Olympics athletes, I would like to say a big thank you for all you do to support Special Olympics BC and especially for taking the Polar Plunge today,” Robinson said to the crowd. “Over the years I have participated in swimming, figure skating, bowling, rhythmic gymnastics, and in each one of these sports I have been encouraged and supported along the way by amazing volunteers and coaches. I have gained a confidence and belief in myself that goes far beyond being able to do a spiral on ice. I have made friendships that will last forever and that will get stronger with time.”

Thanks to the law enforcement members and all the other participants, supporters, and volunteers who made the inaugural Vancouver Polar Plunge such a great success. The BC LETR looks forward to making an even bigger splash for Special Olympics in 2017!



Abbotsford Police Department members show their spirit at Vancouver's first-ever Polar Plunge with Special Olympics BC athlete Michaela Robinson, APD Chief Bob Rich (centre) and Deputy Chief Mike Serr. Photo credit: Megan Grittani-Livingston



A Canada Border Services Agency member steels himself for the first-ever Vancouver Polar Plunge. Photo credit: Albert Art

Visit us at www.specialolympics.bc.ca/letr and on Twitter at @BCLETR.

The Ultimate Plunge Experience

By: Terry Hopkinson, Special Olympics Manitoba



Over the past four years, the Manitoba Law Enforcement Torch Run® for Special Olympics have slowly built their Polar Plunges from one plunge in Winnipeg in 2013 to 3 plunges in three separate locations around province in 2016 - raising just shy of \$250,000 over the 4 years. Along the way, we attended Polar Plunge breakout sessions at the International Conferences and talked to some of the “big boy” Plunge programs like Minnesota and Maryland – we learned

a lot from them and continued to build our Plunges.

However, it was at the New Orleans Conference after listening to the Hawaii plunge organizers talk about their “Polar” plunges that the light went on – our province is situated on Hudson’s Bay – which is part of the Arctic Ocean and one of the major ports on that ocean is Churchill – which just happens to be the Polar Bear Capital of the World – why wouldn’t the Manitoba LETR host one of the northern most polar plunges in the World – in Churchill – and challenge the LETR and Special Olympics World to join us - and the Ultimate Polar Plunge was born.



As we presented at the International LETR Conference in the Bahamas, the LETR Manitoba and our partners LETR Ontario will be hosting the first Ultimate Polar Plunge in the polar bear capital of the world in Churchill, Manitoba on June 30, July 1 and 2, 2016. This is not just a plunge – this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to experience a world class adventure - which includes beluga whale and polar bear tundra tours - and at the same time raise funds and awareness for Special Olympics.

We have partnered with Calm Air and Lazy

Bear Expeditions, internationally recognized leaders in Northern eco-tourism to make this a memorable experience. Please check-out our website – www.manitobalettr.ca to get all the details – don’t delay - we already have 45 plungers registered and we only have 60 seats available on the charter. If you need more information, email us at info@manitobalettr.ca .



Plungers jump in at the Woodbury Polar Plunge. This second year event had 580 Plungers and raised over \$107,000!



A Polar Bear Puppet (run by two puppeteers) sneaks up on the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office and Dive team as they wait for the White Bear Lake Polar Plunge to begin.

Polar Plunge® Minnesota



Minnesota's first ever Run In/Run Our style Polar Plunge took place this year at the Eden Prairie Polar Plunge on March 12th. With temps in the 70s that day, and just inches of ice left, our normal Polar Plunge format needed to be adjusted!



Minions was a super popular costume at Minnesota's Plunges this year. This group was taking the Plunge at Maple Grove, where they had 615 Plungers raise over \$200,000.



Belfast



Dublin



Belfast



Dublin



Cork



Athlone

Polar Plunge® Ireland

Law Enforcement Torch Run® Special Olympics Bharat

By: Raman Rekhi, Special Olympics Bharat

The Special Olympics Flame of Hope has successfully touched many lives in India, heading the lineup of most sporting events. The first Special Olympics Bharat National Games held in 2002 was marked by the longest Torch Run in the history of Special Olympics. The run was flagged off in New Delhi covering over 20,000 kilometres across 29 cities. About 500,000 people took part in it. The event was held across India, from Pondicherry and Chennai in the south to Chandigarh and Delhi in the North and Ahmedabad in the West, reflecting the cultural diversity and integrity of the country.



In 2005 the torch was lit on April 11 in New Delhi by the then President of India, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam. The Games were supported by Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, President of Indian National Congress, Sonia Gandhi, and the then Cabinet

Minister and film actor, the late Sunil Dutt. The Torch run covered 14 cities across India, traversing 12,000 kilometres.



In October **2006**, the Torch Run started as a precursor to the international cricket tournament, ICC Champions Trophy. The torch was handed over to Akshay Kumar, actor and brand

ambassador of Special Olympics Bharat, by Wasim Akram, cricketer and brand ambassador for Special Olympics Pakistan, at the **Wagah Border**. The torch was then transported to Mumbai for the opening ceremony of the tournament.

On December **2008**, a torch run was organized from Chandni Chowk to Lal Quila as a build up to the **World Winter Games 2009**, Idaho. Akshay Kumar, the brand Ambassador of Special Olympics Bharat carried the torch spreading awareness about the upcoming World Games in the presence of Smt. Sheila Dixit, Honorable Chief Minister of Delhi and Mr. Craig Grossgart, Country head, DHL India. The torch was later transported to China and was finally received at the opening ceremony of the 2009 World Winter Games in Boise, Idaho, USA.

Total no. of people present in the audience: 4000+
Athletes: 400 from 40 different schools of Delhi
Law Enforcement Officers on Guard: 300

(Continued on page 34)

(Continued from page 33)

Law Enforcement officers running with the Torch: 15

Volunteers: 500

DHL employees: 100

US Embassy: 60

Media crews: 275 people from 60 different Print publications, News Bureaus, TV Channels, Radio Channels & Online

Celebrities: Akshay Kumar – Bollywood Superstar & Mrs. Sheila Dixit – the then Chief Minister of Delhi



Very recently the state of Haryana witnessed over 300 male and female police and traffic police personnel of the state pledging support to the Special Olympics movement as they accompanied the Athletes covering a stretch of 7 kms across the arterial road of the town of Yamuna Nagar. The Torch Run was a prelude to the National level female Floorball Coaching Camp showing female force like never before. 10 police jeeps and two female police bikers accompanied the torch bearers. A first of its kind Run conducted in the state of Haryana, it was flagged off by the Superintendent of Police Dr. Arun Singh Nehra culminating at Tejli Stadium, Yamunagar. *“They have left me behind also. They have the ability to compete at just any level. They are Winners, they are all potential Gold Medalists”*, Kulvant Kaur, SHO (Station house Officer), Women Police Station, Yamuna Nagar.

Haryana

The states of Haryana UP (Agra) Punjab and Himachal Pradesh witnessed participation of approximately 4000 participants including law enforcement officers, defence personnels, government and state authorities all getting drawn to the enthusiasm and confidence of Special athletes. While upholding abilities of the Athletes they all have made a strong appeal to the public on the urgency of breaking barriers and building an inclusive society.



The Torch Run held in Haryana has led to meetings with district officials and law enforcers in all the districts of the state many of whom have consented to support a Torch run likely to be held in December 2016 across all the 21 districts. Raising awareness about the inaugural participation of Athletes of the state at the Special Olympics World Winter Games 2017, Austria has drawn attention of the authorities who are in the process of designing a coordinated plan.

The National Coaching Camp received a groundbreaking opening as the Chief Guest, **Shri Sarbananda Sonowal**, Hon'ble Union Minister of State – Independent Charge, Youth Affairs & Sports, Skill Development & Entrepreneurship committing strong support to SO Bharat while acknowledging sporting abilities and mass

(Continued on page 35)

(Continued from page 34)

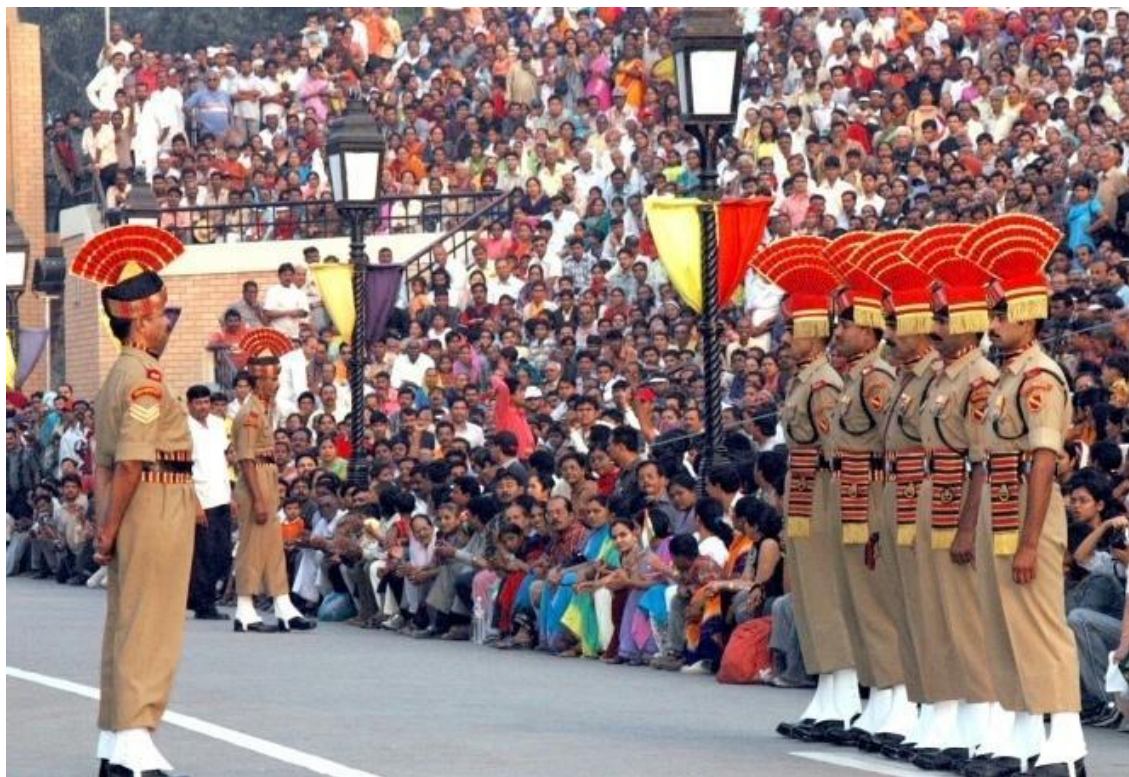
representation of India at the Special Olympics World Games. He announced his decision of inviting all the Medal Winners, from the World Summer Games 2015, to Delhi and to felicitate them with Cash awards of over INR 5 Crores, also mentioning disbursement of INR 22 Lakhs to this particular event. The event was a follow up to a Torch Run marking the beginning of a National Coaching Camp for Floor Hockey in December 2015

Bilaspur, Himachal Pradesh

The Torch Run started from Manasi Sahay Thakur, Deputy Commissioner, Bilaspur and concluded at the SAI Indoor Stadium Luhnau. Torch Run was followed by the arrival of His Excellency Acharya Dev Vrat, Hon'ble Governor of Himachal Pradesh

Plan Ahead

To commemorate 50 years of Special Olympics, a mega torch run will be conducted across 50 cities with an estimated aggregate of 2,00,000 participants, culminating in a Unified National Event.



Polar Plunge® Montreal



A very excited (or terrified) participant of this years' Montréal Polar Plunge anticipating the cold water ! It was -36°C that day!



A brave soul, the RCMP diver spent all afternoon in the cold water, so much that icicles grew on his tuque. That's what a polar -36°C will do!



RCMP officers' take the plunge in uniform! 1, 2, 3 GO!

REGIONAL COORDINATORS

Special Olympics Appointee

Glenn MacDonnell

Special Olympics Ontario

Special Olympics Appointee

Peter Wheeler

Special Olympics International

Special Olympics At-Large

Mark Musso

Special Olympics Missouri

Special Olympics At-Large

Tim Martin (Vice-Chair)

Arizona, LETR

Special Olympics At-Large

Rich Fernandez

Special Olympics Southern
California

SOI Executive Director of LETR

Michael Teem

Special Olympics, Inc.

Chairman Emeritus

Richard LaMunyon (Ret.)

Kansas, LETR

IACP Appointee

Russ Laine

Illinois, LETR

IACP Appointee

Walter McNeil

Florida, LETR

Council Appointee

Steve Nigrelli

New York, LETR

Council Appointee

John Pratt

Northern California, LETR

Law Enforcement At-Large

Antonio Williams

Hawaii, LETR

Law Enforcement At-Large

Kurt Kendro

Hawaii, LETR

Law Enforcement At-Large

Mike Peretti (chair)

Northern California, LETR

Special Olympics Athlete Appointee

Dave Lane

Minnesota, LETR



Region I

CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT

Joe Carlone

Connecticut, LETR

Region II

DC, DE, MD, PA, NJ, NY, VA, WV

John Newnan

Maryland, LETR

Region III

AL, FL, GA, MS, NC, SC, TN

Mike Anderson

Florida, LETR

Region IV

IL, IN, KY, MI, OH

Jim Reno

Indiana, LETR

Region V

IA, MN, NE, ND, SD, WI

Richard Sheldon

Minnesota, LETR

Region VI

AR, KS, LA, MO, OK, TX

Mark Wollmershauser

Oklahoma, LETR

Region VII

AZ, N. CA, S. CA, CO, HI, NV, NM, UT,

GUAM

Robert Woolsey

Nevada, LETR

Region VIII

AK, ID, MT, OR, WA, WY

Ron Casalenda

Wyoming, LETR

Region IX

Western Europe

Gary Gordon

Ireland, LETR

Region X

Eastern Europe/Eurasia

Jacek Hachulski

Poland, LETR

Region XI

Canada

(AB, BS, MB, NB, NF, NWT, NS, ON,
PEI, PQ, SK, YK)

Rick Lucy

Region XII

East Asia

Vacant

Region XIII

Caribbean

(St. Vincent, Jamaica, Barbados, Do-
minica, Antigua, St. Lucia, St. Kitts &
Nevis, Puerto Rico, Grand Cayman,
Bahamas, Grenada, Trinidad & Toba-
go, Guadeloupe, Martinique, US Virgin
Islands, St. Maarten, Bonaire, Curacao,
Aruba, Haiti, Belize, Guyana, Montser-
rat, Suriname)

Stephanie Lindsay

Jamaica, LETR

Region XIV

Oceania

Scott Whyte

Australia, LETR

Region XV

Latin America

Vladimir Caceres

Policia Nacional Civil de El Salvador
El Salvador, LETR

