

Winter / Spring 2009

The Guardian

The Newsletter of the Law Enforcement Torch Run® Executive Council



Exciting stories about the Final Leg
and MUCH MORE inside!!!

The Guardian

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Chairman's CORNER

May 1, 2009

Torch Run Friends:

I hope this edition of The Guardian finds you doing very well and in the middle of a busy Torch Run season! 2009 is racing by and there have been many great reports far and wide—all indicators point to another great year of fundraising and raising awareness for Special Olympics!

On February 25th I had the opportunity to address the majority of the Executive Directors from Special Olympics Programs in the United States. I came away with an overwhelming feeling of support for our Torch Run efforts! They are an amazing group who really do understand and appreciate what we are about and how much of a difference we make. During these tough economic times we are one constant that the SO Programs can count on!

As most of you know, the 2009 Special Olympics World Winter Games and the LETR Final Leg took place earlier this year in Idaho. Both events went very well and exceeded expectations! The Final Leg Team was comprised of an amazing group of officers, athletes, and support personnel who quickly bonded together to achieve great success. The ten Special Olympics athletes on the team touched all of our hearts and made an impression that will last forever—we all returned home transformed, energized, and motivated to do all we can to support Special Olympics! I would like to share with you just one of the many correspondences I received after the Final Leg; this came from the parents of Chris Paynter, an incredible athlete from Oklahoma:

Dear Mike,

Dean and I wanted to express our sincere gratitude to you and all the officers for everything you do, not only for Chris, but for Special Olympics. As parents of a child, or shall I say a young adult with intellectual disabilities, we are extremely grateful that there is a Special Olympics. We also know that without the support and much needed funds that LETR provides, Special Olympics would not be the organization it is today. Christopher was a very young and chubby 8 years old when we discovered there was a place for him to participate in athletic competitions. Along with Chris, we have watched and cheered at many, many events. Christopher loved the competition and the friendships made at all events. This set all of us on a very special road where we, as Chris's family, have loved every moment. Thirty five years ago, we were told to expect nothing from our son. We refused to believe and accept that. We have watched Chris grow as a person with high self-esteem and strong confidence in himself. I truly believe that without his involvement in Special Olympics, Chris would not be the person he is today. Special Olympics has provided so many opportunities for Chris for which we will always be grateful. LETR has made many of these opportunities possible for Chris and thousands like him.

These past two weeks have been a wonderful opportunity for Chris to continue to grow independently. I thank you for these opportunities. To say he had a good time is an understatement. He, nor Dean and I, will ever forget what all of you have done for Chris. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts. You and all the officers are in our hearts forever.

Ellen Paynter

This powerful message is to and for all of us!! I wish you the best in all of your endeavors, have a great summer, and thank you for all that you do for Special Olympics!

Take care and stay safe,

Chairman, LETR Executive Council



Law Enforcement Torch Run® Final Leg for the 2009 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Idaho

*Major Michael Teem, Raleigh NC PD
2009 Final Leg Team Captain*

The Law Enforcement Torch Run (LETR) once again was very active and engaged in the marquis event of Special Olympics—the World Games. The Final Leg of the Torch Run, representing the cumulative and collective efforts of Torch Runners the world over, is the Torch Run's best connection with the global Special Olympics movement.

The 2009 edition of the LETR Final Leg marked the 12th World Games dating back to 1987 in which law enforcement officers representing Torch Run Programs around the world gathered to raise tremendous awareness for Special Olympics and the World Games. The 2009 Final Leg Team, representing 70 Special Olympics and LETR Programs, consisted of 81 law enforcement officer runners, 10 incredible Special Olympics athletes, and 26 support and documentation personnel—and what a great Team it was!!



Photo by: Ralph Alswang

The Flame of Hope™, which was lit in Athens, Greece on November 12, 2008, finally arrived in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho on January 29th following an amazing journey to ten cities across five continents. The Flame was delivered by boat on beautiful Lake Coeur d'Alene then handed off to the Final Leg Team by DHL, the Official Sponsor of the 2009 LETR Final Leg. The First Lady of Idaho, Laurie Otter, gave a warm welcome to the Final Leg Team prior to a wonderful ceremony and run through town. Ben

Rigby, our Idaho athlete representative, received the Flame and really got the Team fired up and ready for the challenge ahead!

The Final Leg Team then embarked on a ten day journey throughout the beautiful state of Idaho to carry the Flame of Hope and deliver the powerful and inspirational message of Special Olympics to many thousands of people. Our mission was also to raise awareness for the World Winter Games and encourage everyone to support the Games. With competition events and venues being mainly in the Boise area, we had the opportunity to take the Games and the spirit of Special Olympics to the people in the far reaches of Idaho—and that is exactly what we did!



Law Enforcement Torch Run® Final Leg for the 2009 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Idaho

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To accomplish this lofty mission, the Final Leg Team divided into running groups and covered more than 70 communities across Idaho, conducting Torch Runs and significant ceremonies made possible by the outstanding planning efforts of the Idaho Final Leg Committee. Jim Kerns, the Idaho Torch Run Director, and his amazing team of dedicated individuals worked hard for over two years to pull everything together. Their efforts paid great dividends not only for the Final Leg and the World Games but also for increased engagement opportunities for the officers and citizens of Idaho moving forward!



We all found Idaho to be majestic in its beauty and variety—the snow covered mountains, dry plains, and beautiful hills, valleys, lakes, and river gorges made for interesting and challenging torch running! Most ceremonies were held at local schools where students and community members enthusiastically welcomed the Torch and

Team and also learned more about Special Olympics and of the abilities of participating athletes. Local athletes and athletes from Host Town delegations joined us in many communities to run and take part in ceremonies. The people of Idaho were very supportive and turned out in large numbers to see the Flame of Hope and support Special Olympics, and the message we carried was also shared with many others thanks to the great media and print coverage afforded to the Final Leg.

Our efforts culminated on February 7th when a representative running group of the Final Leg Team, led by our ten Special Olympics athletes, delivered the Flame of Hope to the 2009 World Winter Games Opening Ceremonies. Scores of other Team members

were in their police uniforms and prominently positioned close to the cauldron when it was lit—always the highlight moment of Opening Ceremonies!



Law Enforcement Torch Run® Final Leg for the 2009 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Idaho

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The true leaders and motivators of our Team were the ten Special Olympics athletes that were selected to participate. They spoke at every event, they carried the torch together in a unified effort with officers every step of the way, and they ran at the front of the running pack for ten straight days. Every ceremony attendee, and certainly every Final Leg Team Member, went home a better person blessed with a very powerful and enriching experience thanks to the Special Olympics athletes on the Team. For their dedicated and tireless efforts, each athlete was presented with a torch used during the Final Leg. Listed below are our ten amazing athletes who will never be forgotten:

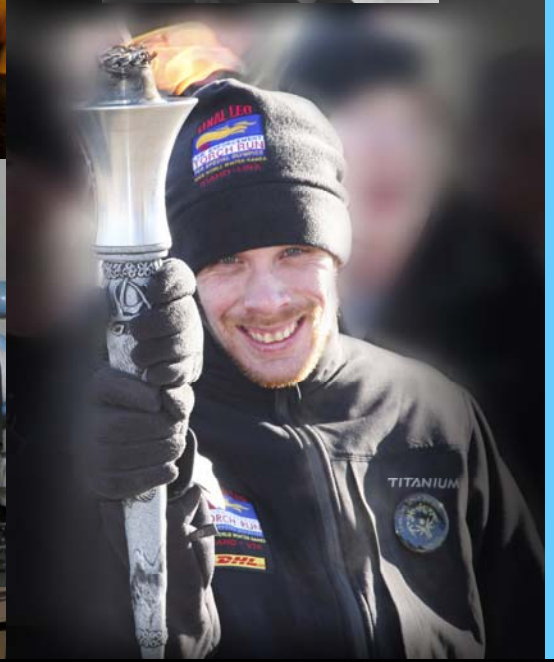
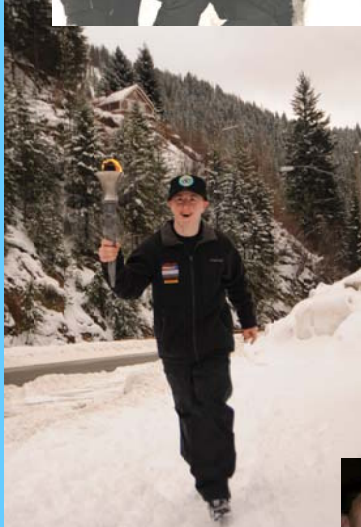
Aaron Aarseth, Oregon
Alan Fry Jr., Southern California
James Neeson, Ireland
Van Pexa, New Mexico
Ben Rigby, Idaho

Amara Coon, Hawaii
Paula Morrissy, South Australia
Christopher Paynter, Oklahoma
Jason Reinhold, Michigan
Nathan West, Queensland, Australia



Once again it was a beautiful thing to see and experience—officers and athletes from all over the world coming together with the power of Special Olympics in their hearts and with the purpose of influencing and motivating others—to find that they themselves are transformed and changed individuals with a new set of life-long friends! I know that the legacy of the 2009 Final Leg will continue to grow in the years ahead as the officers and athletes on the Final Leg Team take the experience they were given and significantly expand their level of involvement, look for leadership opportunities, and raise even more money for the wonderful athletes of Special Olympics!

Final Leg Photo Highlights

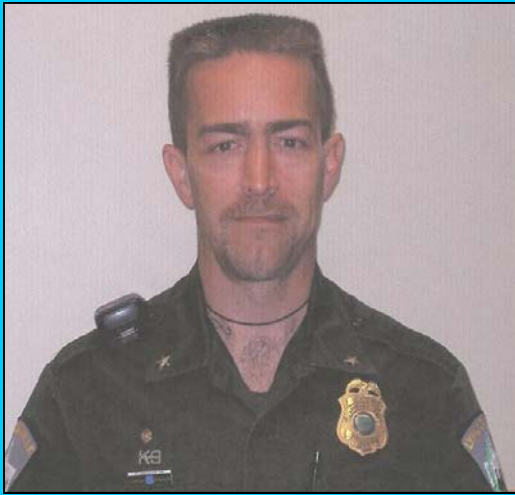


Final Leg Photo Highlights



THE MEANING OF THE TORCH

By: Chief Jack Harris, Vermont LETR



My trip to Idaho was a long one that was filled with plane delays and airport dashes to make my connecting flights. By the time I arrived in Denver for my last connector, I darted to the next gate, figuring on only minutes to spare, if I made it at all. To my surprise, arriving at the gate, this plane was also delayed.

It was quick to find other members of our group, as Torch Run shirts from around the country stood out among the crowds. Introductions were made and our small group gathered in idle conversation.

That was the first time I met Christopher Paynter. While talking with others, I was tapped on my shoulder. I turned and was met by a smiling face and an extended hand. "Hi, I'm Christopher Paynter, your room mate." We shook hands and Chris returned to the bag he had left along the rail.

After another flight and a bus ride, we were ushered into the hotel and assigned our rooms. I eagerly went to my room, looking to finally kick back after a long day of travel. There again, I met Chris.

I was amazed at how quickly we bonded. At first meeting, I knew that I was not there to "take care" of Chris. I was there to support Chris as he was there to support me.

Over the next week and a half, and several hotels and bus trips, myself and Chris became good friends. Several times, my team told me that when and if I needed alone time, they would offer to help out. I could not, or would not tell them at the time, but I was not with Chris because I had to be, I was there because I wanted to be.

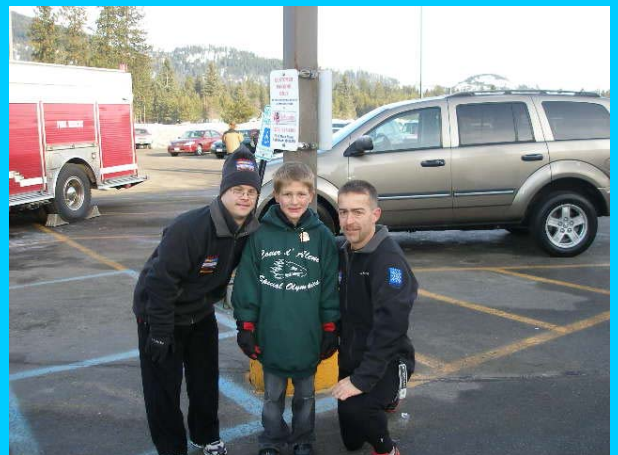
As the running progressed, it became evident that Chris was a determined person that each of us could learn from. "I'm here to challenge myself", was a phrase he used several times.

What few people, other than our team may have known was in September of 2008, Christopher had surgery on both knees. Meeting with his parents later in the week, we laughed as they told of Dean (Chris' father) carrying Chris upstairs on his back. Besides the knee surgery, I also learned that as late as Monday, 26 January 2009, Chris' participation was questionable, as he was extremely sick and on medication. But Chris "challenged" himself. I look back now and can tell you that there are not many of us that could go through double knee surgery and an illness and still step to the line, day in and day out, run after run.

As the week wore on, and the ceremonies continued, I was excited and depressed all at once. Standing in those auditoriums, filled shoulder to shoulder with kids, adults and athletes, I began to wonder if we really had an effect on anyone.

Once we left, would anyone get our message, would anyone pick up the torch that we had left behind.

It was the last two days of the Final Leg that summed it up for me. It was our last run and our team party that left a lasting mark with me forever.



Chris Paynter, a local Idaho Special Olympics athlete, and Chief Jack Harris

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THE MEANING OF THE TORCH

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On the final day of running, it was our job to deliver the torch to the Opening Ceremonies. It had been a long day already and this was scheduled to be one of the longer runs of the event. For some of us, the running that we did was not an issue, but not everyone is a runner. As the run wore on, several people would have to take a time out here and there. We had made a quick stop when Chester Kau (Hawaii), and Larry Mays (New Jersey) rejoined our group. I don't know if they knew how far we had to go or not, but as the final run wore on, step after step, these two fought and put every last bit of energy into finishing with the group. It wasn't the encouragement that kept them going, it was something else. And as they embraced at the end of this last run and were congratulated for their efforts by each person in the group, I still did not grasp what it was that kept them going.



I even asked myself once or twice, along the way, why? Why would these athletes step to the line, knowing the pain and struggle that they will endure. Why would they run until they could run no more? Why would these law enforcement runners volunteer for this? Again, the pain, the struggle, why put themselves through it? I had watched as Chris became more and more homesick as the week went on. He would call his parents several times throughout the day, with the calls becoming more and more frequent.



Then the "party" came, and every last question was answered. Our task was done and it was time to relax. At one point through out the evening, I noticed that Chris had been missing for a while. I went to the men's room and found him on the phone with his parents. As the night progressed, Michael Teem presented each of our athletes with a Torch that we had carried. As the athletes showed off their torches, received congratulations and posed for photo's, I again noticed that Chris was gone.

Chris Paynter, Special Olympics Oklahoma Athlete, Final Leg Runner

phone with his parents bragging of his new prize. What I found was the answer. The answer to why?

Sitting on a chair in the men's room, Chris held the torch in front of him. The base in his lap and the shining reflective top, mere feet from his face. His eyes were locked on the torch. A smile from ear to ear, with tears streaming down from under his glasses. I knelt down next to him, not wanting to disturb his moment, but wanting to make sure he was okay. Without moving, without looking away from his torch, in a quiet broken voice Chris said, "This is so very special." That was it. That was the answer. Although it was why I originally got involved in Special Olympics, every now and again, it is necessary to be reminded. We do not do this for us, it is for the athletes that participate and what it means to them.

I went to the men's room, expecting Chris to be on the

Team Ireland Team Ireland

Gets Torch Run Send Off To Idaho

The Irish LETR program is a joint program between both Irish police services and the members from the Police Service of Northern Ireland and An Garda Siochana were delighted to be at the Dublin airport to bid farewell to Team Ireland as they departed for the 2009 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Idaho.

The eight athletes were joined by Special Olympics Ireland CEO Matt English, as well as Special Olympics Europe/Eurasia Managing Director Mary Davis, An Garda Siochana Torch Run Director Deputy Commissioner Nacie Rice and PSNI Deputy Torch Run Director, Superintendent Peter Loughins as well as coaches, family and supporters.

Western European Regional Coordinator Jeremy Adams was part of the send off party and stated, "We (Garda and PSNI) wanted to add our support for the Team as they headed off to the Games and we were delighted that both our LETR Directors were also able to join us. It was an emotional moment as several hundred airport travelers joined us in applauding the team as they made their way to their plane. We also got the opportunity of meeting La Toya Jackson, who was returning to the USA and wished the Team well and posed for photographs."

In Idaho, Final Leg Torch Run members, SO Ireland athlete James Neeson, Garda Sergeant Gary Gordon and PSNI Constable Steve Douglas, met up with Team Ireland as they prepared to take part in the Games and again wished them well as they went on to win 14 medals (six Gold, four Silver and four Bronze).



A Truly Humbling Experience

By Master Patrol Officer Christopher T. Cavallaro



Christopher Cavallaro

I've been involved with Special Olympics New Hampshire for just about six years now and had the honor of being selected to represent my state as a runner at the 2009 Law Enforcement Torch Run Final Leg which took place in Idaho. This experience was truly a humbling one and really opened my eyes to just how globally HUGE and important Special Olympics really is. I definitely would not call myself a softy by any means, but certain moments nearly brought me to tears...notice I said *nearly*.

A little background: I am a Master Patrolman with the Hudson Police Department in Southern New Hampshire where I have been an officer for seven years. After my first year on the job, the two Hudson Special Olympics volunteer officers who had volunteered their time for many years, felt it was time to step down and give someone else a chance to get involved. I was approached and asked if I would like to take one of their positions. Throughout my high school days on Long Island I remembered the Special Olympics Games taking place and my classmates volunteering. Unfortunately, I was a wrestler and the Games usually took place during the wrestling season. I then thought back to my days at Norwich University and the Special Olympics events taking place there. Did I volunteer then? No...shame on me! I was a member of a Mountain Rescue Team and trained all of the time. However this time, no excuses. I gladly jumped at the opportunity to finally volunteer.

Throughout the years, I have led the Hudson leg of the Law Enforcement Torch Run, presented medals to the athletes at the various Games to include the State Fall Games in Hudson, and the State Winter Games held at Waterville Valley. The feeling I get when handing a medal to an athlete is rewarding in itself. Watching them compete and truly give it

their all for the spirit of competition is amazing. These athletes don't get televised fame and fortune, they don't get major commercial endorsements by Nike, Adidas, and Champion, yet they still do it; and give it their all every time. That is the mark of a true athlete. That is what should be admired!

Carol Cray (Director of Volunteers & LETR Liaison for Special Olympics New Hampshire) called me one afternoon and asked if I would be willing to represent the SONH in the 2009 LETR Final Leg leading up to the World Games. I was instantly filled with excitement and I thought back to the past NH LETR World Winter Games runners telling all about their own experiences in Ireland and China. I thought to myself, SWEET!! Where are they sending me, Italy, Germany, Norway, Poland??? I finally gathered myself and told Carol that I would be honored and asked where the Games were going to be held. She replied in her usual happy chipper voice, Boise, Idaho!! I believe there was a brief moment of silence after that. All I could think as I hung my head was.....potatoes! Quickly and suddenly, I snapped out of it and realized what an honor it was to even be chosen for this event. I would be representing my State, SONH, and all the athletes I had presented awards to all these years, WOW! I could not wait to tell everyone I knew and that's just what I did.

After receiving what seemed to be 1000 emails regarding my flight schedule, packing list, team listings, daily run and event schedules, I read hotel roommate selections. My roommate was listed as a Nathan West from Queensland, Australia and there was an asterisk next to his name. As I read down the page, I noticed a legend at the bottom noting that the * next to a person's name meant that they were a Special Olympics athlete. At home, all I'm responsible for are my two dogs and now I'm going to be responsible for an athlete? Another list showed that I would be giving a speech after one of our runs, and sure enough, I would be giving the first speech on my running team. I shook it off and focused on the task at hand.

Soon enough January 28th came and I was flying out of Manchester Airport to Spokane, Washington (Final Leg Torch Run beginning point). After kissing my wife goodbye and a quick strip search at airport security, I was in the sky anticipating the week and a half of running ahead of me. After landing in Spokane, the runners were all warmly greeted by the LETR Support Team. Now being from New Hampshire, I'm pretty used to the cold weather, until I set foot outside for the first time; WOW was it cold. We were all directed into a bus and shipped to our hotel. At the hotel, we were once again warmly greeted by more Support Staff and given the itinerary for the day and our room key. As I lugged my bags upstairs and opened my room, I was excited and a little anxious to meet my roommate. After emptying out my bags and hanging up my uniform, my roommate walked in. With an Australian accent he greeted me and we talked for a while. What a great person to room with....I had lucked out and could not have been happier.

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A Truly Humbling Experience

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Nathan West (L) and Chris Cavallaro

I learned that Nathan was twenty-four years old and was a soccer goal tender for his team in the Australian Special Olympics program winning several medals with his team in Sydney and China. He has been involved in Special Olympics for nine years and also played cricket and basketball. He had never seen the snow before arriving in the States and was excited. I then went downstairs to receive my gear for the days ahead. I was handed a GIANT Columbia bag with my name on it and headed back upstairs to my room. I opened the bag and was amazed at all of the quality Columbia cold weather gear we were given. It was really top notch stuff and it was all embroidered with the 2009 Final Leg logo. Next stop was back downstairs to meet my team for the first time. I was to be a member of team 9, and what a great team I would come to realize it was. We had police officers from all over including Alaska, California, Nova Scotia, China, Holland, North Carolina, and West Virginia (which I was told is its own State). My team was soon fittingly known as the misfits.

Bright and early the next morning we sported our new gear and loaded onto the buses headed to Coeur d'Alene, Idaho where the First Lady of Idaho would receive the torch and pass it on to the LETR Final Leg team to officially begin the Torch Run. The scenery was amazing in Idaho. There were rolling mountains and pristine lakes and rivers everywhere. For a mountain man like me, this was heaven. After receiving the torch, we kicked off our first run. Before becoming a cop, I was in a military school and was accustomed to running in formation. I could quickly tell that

several of the others were not. Slowly the kinks seemed to work themselves out and we started to run together as a unit calling out cadences. As we ran through the streets the people would look and cheer us on. The atmosphere was very kind and inviting.

The second day marked the day I would deliver my speech. We started at the Canadian border where we were greeted by the Canadian Royal Mounted Police. We then made our way down to Bonners Ferry, Idaho where my speech would be given. Leading the pack with the torch as we ran, I worried about my speech and how it would be received as I have never been accused of being a great public speaker. As we entered the doors of the high school gymnasium the stands erupted with cheers and applause. We made several laps around the gym with the torch and the crowd never stopped cheering. After a brief speech from the Town Mayor and Chief of Police, I approached the podium. My rehearsed speech went out the window and I let my thoughts and feelings take over. As soon as I realized what was going on, my speech was over and the crowd was on their feet cheering. Hmm, must have done alright!

Throughout the days we ran miles and miles and miles, rode on buses several more miles, and mile, and miles, and presented speeches in many towns and cities. Everywhere we ran, the town's people would cheer us on. The pack was always led by an LETR officer and an athlete proudly holding the burning torch. On the buses, we would either sleep, talk about the runs past, or joke around with one another. Two of my teammates and I were pretty knowledgeable about music and could sing. We would belt out tunes loud enough for the whole bus to hear. My team declared the back of the bus as ours. After all, only the cool kids can ride in the back of the bus. Each speech seemed to get better and better as we went along and everyone's personality came out in their speeches. Having given his same speech several times, Nathan approached me about helping him write a new one. I gladly agreed to help and we got started right away. His new speech included several Aussie saying like "Good-day mate" and "Put another shrimp on the barby". We also added some small pokes and jabs at some of our teammates for fun. The crowds seemed to eat it up and he was happy with the response.

Super Bowl Sunday came and a banquet hall was set up for all of us with several televisions positioned around the room. The food was brought out and the big game began. All the mega football fans came out and the fun started. What a great night it was. We all knew that a long day of running was ahead, but we all continued to have a good time. The next morning we all loaded into the buses bright-eyed and bushy-tailed.

After 11 straight days of running with the torch we finally hit the last day. Sore and tired, all of the officers and athletes gathered what little energy we had left and made the last run to the Center of Idaho Stadium, where the Winter Games Opening Ceremonies would be held, a memorable one. This run was somewhat longer than all of our previous runs and it seemed people were falling out left and right. I could not help but notice that my roommate, Nate, was leading the group the entire way pushing himself as hard as he could. I could not help but be proud of him for sticking it out. That is what Special Olympics is all about. Time and time again, you see all of these well known athlete superstars quitting when the going gets tough. Not these athletes, no way. As we crested the last hill and could see our destination, the pace seemed to pick up and the group came together as one, running in sync and proud.

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A Truly Humbling Experience

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Arriving at the stadium was a great moment and the uncontrollable smiles on everyone's faces displayed their emotion. Great job everyone!

Day 12 was the 2009 Special Olympics World Winter Games Opening Ceremonies. We all put on our police dress uniforms and once again loaded into the buses. I was honored to be positioned right in front of the cauldron as it was to be lit. We were told we would be leading a country delegation into the stadium for the ceremony. I was tasked with leading the Puerto Rican delegation into the stadium. What an experience that was seeing all of these thousands of athletes from all different countries, some of which I had never heard of. As I led the Puerto Rican delegation into the stadium an uncontrollable smile showed on my face and I was overwhelmed with amazement as we entered. This was a professional deal. After leading them to their seating area, I was able to take to the stands and watch for a while until the torch was to be brought in. I was amazed at the performances by Kenny G, and many of the athletes, the speeches given by just about all of the Kennedy/Shriver family and from several of the athletes from what I like to call the "Plain Old Olympics" like Scott Hamilton and Kristi Yamaguchi, and a great performance from the group Flame, which is a band comprised of people with special needs. They really rocked the house.

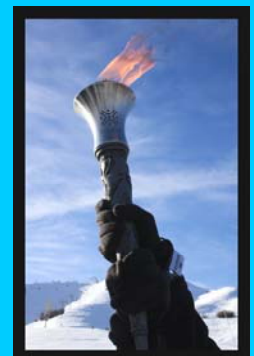
As soon as we were given the cue, we headed down to our positions for the entrance of the torch. This was orchestrated perfectly. All of the athletes that ran with us in the days past accompanied by all of the law enforcement team leaders ran into the stadium with the torch. It was then handed off to an athlete from another country who ran it around the stadium once. This was repeated several times by different athletes from different countries. The torch was then brought to the center of the stadium where the cauldron was lit as we all saluted. It was great! What a feeling to be part of that! At that moment it finally dawned on me just how impressive and just how globally HUGE this organization really is.



That night, we had our final dinner together. My team had become so close over the 12 day period I really did not want it to end. Over the course of those 12 days, we had run as a group, over 65 miles throughout the state of Idaho spreading the Special Olympics message together. I was asked to give a small speech about having Nate as a roommate while we received our plaques. I was once again more than honored to do this! As I stood behind the podium, I expressed to my LETR peers just how proud of Nate I was. I talked about my initial apprehension about being responsible for an athlete when in actuality, it was Nate who ended up keeping me on schedule and woke me up out of bed and seemed to be responsible for me. I also expressed how I looked up to him for his strength and courage in keeping up with the running and explained that he had never once fell out of a run even though I could see he was in physical agony. I was glad Nate was my roommate, and he is my Brother-From-Another-Mother. Thank you to all of my teammates, to Roy for being such a great and respectful team leader. Thank you to Mike Teem for all that you do to make so many athlete and officers' dreams come true. Finally a big Thank You to Special Olympics New Hampshire for giving me this great and humbling opportunity! I really can't thank you enough.



Final Leg Memories!





Special Olympics
Be a fan™



Record-breaking funds, fun and awareness in support of Special Olympics athletes generated at the Law Enforcement Torch Run® 2009 Polar Plunge® Events!

This year's Polar Plunge fundraiser season was one filled with firsts and growth. Many programs hosted first-time events, and others saw significant increases in funds raised and participants involved. While Torch Run programs continue to grow and raise the bar on fundraising, what remains consistent is the ability for the Polar Plunge event to inspire FUN. Enjoy the ever-growing success and hilarious good times experienced this year!



KANSAS



Photo: Myron S. Cramer, SOKS photographer

In Kansas, a Mexican Dinner troupe, complete with Salsa and Chips takes the plunge ... though it seems that the beans preferred more of a “dip!” Special Olympics Kansas held 9 events with 816 participants raising more than \$202,000. Que bueno!

PENNSYLVANIA



Special Olympics Pennsylvania held its first Polar Plunge to benefit their state’s Torch Run Program on a beautiful and sunny (but chilly!) winter’s day. Participants raised \$71,000 at Polar Plunges throughout the state.

WISCONSIN



The sun was unfortunately not shining in Madison, Wisconsin as participants prepared to jump, but that did not dissuade 2,500 folks from raising more than \$350,000 at the 2009 Madison Polar Plunge, the 10th year of this event. Also congrats to the Green Bay Polar Plunge which reached a new, six-figure level--\$100,000! More than 7,800 participants in Wisconsin's 11 Polar Plunges raised more than \$1.5 million!

UTAH



Soaring through the air at Special Olympics Utah's Saratoga Spring's Polar Plunge. . . Special Olympics Utah held three plunges this year raising \$31,000, an increase of 63% from the 2008 totals.

NORTH CAROLINA



Photo: Paul Stackhouse

A Law Enforcement Torch Run volunteer jumps in uniform at the Kernersville, North Carolina Polar Plunge to benefit Special Olympics North Carolina. The event raised more than \$36,000. Also, the Guilford County Sheriff's Office in Greensboro hosted their ninth annual Polar Plunge on February 21, 2009. They raised \$40,000 with 156 plungers.

ARIZONA



Special Olympics Arizona hosted Tucson's inaugural Polar Plunge on Saturday, February 28 at Breakers Water Park. Participants raised nearly \$17,000! A 78 degree day, 400 pounds of ice were used to chill the water to 54 degrees. Special Olympics Arizona reported zero cases of frostbite, a few cases of sunburn and too many smiles to count!

NEW YORK



No need to bring your own ice to Rochester, New York's Polar Plunge, where enthusiastic and BRAVE participants raised \$200,000. This was one of eight Polar Plunges held to benefit Special Olympics New York.

OKLAHOMA



Special Olympics Oklahoma raised \$116,000 this year, more than doubling their 2008 total. Pictured here are participants at the Oklahoma City Polar Plunge, including 2009 Final Leg Runner, Sergeant Shawn Byrne (center).

HAWAII



Hawaii says, “Aloha” to Polar Plunge

by Ben Moszkowicz, Director, LETR Hawaii

On Saturday, March 28, 2009 supporters of Special Olympics Hawaii joined the wave of Polar Plunge fundraisers happening across America.

Over 90 inaugural plungers braved the frigid waters of the “Kapolei Kooler,” an attraction at the Hawaiian Waters Adventure Park. They were able to raise just over \$22,000 in support of the half-day event.

Unlike programs in the colder reaches of the globe, Torch Runners in Hawaii can’t just shovel off a frozen pond, cut a hole in the ice and jump in. Instead, an army of volunteers was up at 5:00 a.m. shoveling almost 20 tons of ice from cooler trucks into a 19,000-gallon pool. Their efforts paid off, and the water temperature dipped into the 30s just before the plunge began.

The event would not have been nearly as successful without the huge corporate support from Tesoro. In addition to promoting the event internally as a team building exercise, Tesoro offered to match donations to Special Olympics for employees who were plunged.

This is the first ever event of its kind open to the public in Hawaii. The Hawaii LETR program hosted a Super Plunge in October 2008 in which 20 people plunged once an hour for 24 hours. The October event raised \$30,000.

INDIANA



Thing 1 and Thing 2 participated in one of ten Special Olympics Indiana Polar Plunge events along with 1151 others, raising \$246,535 for the Special Olympics athletes of Indiana.

COLORADO



It seems the Thing Family was on a Polar Plunge circuit as they popped up again, joined by two others, in Colorado where they participated in Special Olympics Colorado's first Annual Polar Plunge event. With 209 excited first-time plungers, including 12 Law Enforcement agencies, \$54,000 was raised.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA



Photo: Neezar Samara

The Golden Gate Bridge provided a beautiful backdrop for this Polar Plunge in the San Francisco Bay. Special Olympics Northern California held four plunges this year, raising more than \$153,000. Of note, is the Fresno, California Plunge which raised \$16,794, tripling 2008's total for this Plunge location!

OREGON



In Bend, Oregon participants celebrate the completion of their Plunge, raising \$75,000. Also, congratulations to the Portland, Oregon Polar Plunge that raised \$125,000 with 630 plungers in its inaugural year!

SOUTH CAROLINA



A sunny day at Myrtle Beach greeted these participants of the Special Olympics South Carolina Polar Plunge where more than \$60,000 was raised in support of their athletes.

MICHIGAN



The entire cast of characters from Special Olympics Michigan's Polar Plunge event pose for a pre-Plunge photo. Michigan hosted several events across the state raising more than \$289,000.

MARYLAND



Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley, Special Olympics athletes Ben Collins (a 13 year plunger and SOI employee!) and Michael Waschak lead Maryland participants into the water. More than 11,000 participated in the 13th Annual MSP Polar Bear Plunge at Sandy Point State Park in Annapolis, Maryland on January 24. A crowd of approximately 20,000 spectators in addition to the plungers took part in the Plungapalooza Winter Festival.

ILLINOIS



Special Olympics Illinois conducted no less than 18 plunges, including the SUPER Plunge pictured here. More than 3,600 participants raised \$943,433 + !

OHIO



These pirates CHAAARRRGED into the water in support of Ohio's 22,000 Special Olympics athletes. Nearly 1,300 participants raised \$289,582 in eight events across the state.

MONTANA



It is "safety in numbers" for these Montana participants who are preparing to jump into the icy waters together. Nearly 900 people came together at eight events across the state to raise \$200,000 for Special Olympics Montana.

IOWA



Four Polar Plunge events took place across the state of Iowa. More than 650 participants, including this enthusiastic crew raised more than \$100,000 for Special Olympics Iowa. Can you find Special Olympics Iowa's Torch Run Liaison hidden in this photo?

GIBRALTAR



Torch Run volunteers in Gibraltar participate in a Polar Plunge event, wearing their Torch Run t-shirts. The nine Torch Run participants raised \$424 along with great awareness for the Special Olympics athletes of Gibraltar.

RHODE ISLAND



Special Olympics Rhode Island athlete Michael Walter was the top fundraiser at Rhode Island's Plunge this year, raising more than \$7,300! Special Olympics Rhode Island hosted its Second Annual Torch Run Polar Plunge on Sunday, March 8. One-hundred-fifty plungers raised \$33,000, a 40% increase over their 2008 totals. Very well done Michael and Special Olympics Rhode Island!

Congratulations to all on another successful year!

SOUTH CAROLINA HOLDS THEIR 1ST

WLTC IN 2008!

By: Sam Alexander, South Carolina LETR Liaison



On October 4, 2008, the Law Enforcement Torch Run® held their very first World's Largest Truck Convoy® to benefit Special Olympics South Carolina. A total of \$3,500 was raised with 17 trucks participating in the 20-mile Convoy. While this may not seem like a lot of money, every penny we raise for Special Olympics counts, and we look at our inaugural year for this event as a solid foundation for future success!

Among those who participated in the Convoy was Mr. Barry Owens from Moscow, Tennessee. Mr. Owens called me a few months before our Convoy and told me he was planning on attending our event as he likes to support Special Olympics, and in fact, was going to plan his trip so he could attend other states Convoys having them around the same time. Owens comes from a family of truck drivers, including his father and brother. His career as a long distance truck driver was altered after being involved in a head-on accident on November 19, 1981 leaving him paralyzed from the waist down. He started driving again in March 1985 when he bought a one-ton F-350 pickup and started hauling Hot Shot (class 3-5 truck pulling a gooseneck flatbed trailer) freight. His next goal was to acquire his CDL although he is a paraplegic and HE DID IT!

Yes, Owens drives his truck from a wheelchair. That's right, a wheelchair. His truck is a special 18-wheeler equipped with all the latest equipment making it possible for someone in a wheelchair to operate it and even has a computer and a place to sleep.

Owens drove his truck in our Convoy and let all who wanted take a tour and photos, including several of him with athletes next to his truck. He then worked with a vendor to have T-shirts with a picture of the athletes and himself beside his truck on them and gave one to each of the athletes. He shared with the athletes that no matter what disabilities they might have, they can still have dreams and those dreams can come true if they work at it.



Barry Owen and SOSC staff member/athlete Travis Luthren

Owens was engaged at the time of his accident and now Kathy is his wife, staying right by his side. It was her commitment that gave him the drive he needed to overcome this challenge. When he got out of the hospital he knew that his life as he had known it would never be the same. And yet, Owens doesn't feel sorry for himself, quite the contrary. He has accepted his new, altered life and spends his days making a difference for so many others who spend their days and nights in a wheelchair. He travels from state to state sharing his story through inspirational talks to other paraplegics, showing them that no matter what kind of career they want, **THEY CAN DO IT!**

LAW ENFORCEMENT TORCH RUN ACROSS EUROPE

Raising awareness for the Law Enforcement Torch Run across Europe was one of the key outcomes from Region IX's conference held in Dublin in 2008, so both European Torch Run Regional Coordinators, Jeremy Adams (Region IX Western Europe) and Jacek Hachulski (Region X Eastern Europe) were delighted to receive an invitation from Special Olympics Europe/Eurasia Managing Director, Mary Davis to attend the Special Olympics Leadership conference in Bucharest, Romania in November 2008.

Both Jeremy and Jacek were warmly welcomed by the delegates, who were mainly Special Olympics Directors from across Europe/Eurasia including countries such as Russia, Israel, Croatia, Hungary and Germany. A Torch Run presentation was delivered during a plenary session and this allowed for SO programs to express an interest in setting up a Torch Run in their respective country AND there were a number of programs who expressed an interest in this possibility.

Jeremy agreed to follow up the expressed interests when he attends the European IACP Conference in Tallinn, Estonia in April 2009, when again he along with his own Torch Run program director, Duncan McCausland and Mary Davis will deliver a presentation to all attendees on the Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics. Jeremy stated, "This is an excellent opportunity to follow upon the interest shown by SO directors with their respective Chief Police Officer. We will highlight the success of the Torch Run in Ireland and the benefits to both Irish Police Services and Special Olympics Ireland and hopefully we will be able to expand the number of European Torch Run programs." Jeremy added that he was delighted to welcome his Portuguese police colleagues, who have recently set up a Torch Run program in their country.

After the SO conference, Jeremy travelled to Poland with Jacek to take part in the Global Torch Run, which was arriving in Warsaw two days after the conference. Fellow European Torch Run colleagues from: the Czech Republic, Great Britain and the Netherlands also joined the Global Torch Run and had a thoroughly enjoyable time in a hugely successful Torch Run that involved over 220 law enforcement officers running to the Warsaw City Center and to a number of ceremonies that included the Polish President, Chairmen of both Chambers of Parliament, Prime Minister, Mayor of City of Warsaw and the U.S. Ambassador to Poland.

Jacek stated "I am delighted the Global Torch Run was able to visit Warsaw and we were able to showcase, not for the first time, Torch Run and Special Olympics Poland, this time to promote the 2010 European Special Olympics Games, which are taking place in Warsaw."

Both Jeremy and Jacek are dedicated to raising awareness of the Torch Run across the whole of Europe/Eurasia in advance of the 2011 World Special Olympics Summer Games, which are being hosted in Greece.



FLORDIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION'S STATEWIDE BARBEQUE FOR SPECIAL OLYMPICS

A HUGE SUCCESS!

Early in the morning of Thursday, March 27th, some Florida Department of Corrections employees were waking up and getting ready for work like they do most days, while others were getting up for a different reason altogether. The forecast called for stormy weather pushing in from the west with rain and high winds building as the day progressed, not exactly good barbeque weather.

Although the outlook wasn't promising, volunteer cooks all over the state were cranking up grills, cookers and ovens in preparation for the 3rd Annual Barbeque across the State for Special Olympics. The concept is simple, every institution and every probation and parole circuit in the department would have a barbeque on the same day to raise money for Special Olympics Florida. With 60 major prison facilities and over 150 probation and parole offices in 20 circuits, it's not hard to understand why this has been such a huge success for the department and Special Olympics Florida.



When Pat Finan was assigned the task of directing the department's efforts for the Law Enforcement Torch Run in 2007, the agency head at the time gave him three tasks. Create a solid organizational structure, increase participation and increase fundraising. "When I went back and looked at how the campaign was run in the past, it was obvious there was no organizational structure. It was very loopy goosy with each facility operating independently, with most not participating at all".

The first task that needed to be done was to create a structure. So Pat created an organizational chart with coordinators and co-coordinators at each institution and circuit office. Those employees would report directly to a regional liaison that was responsible for coordinating the department's efforts in a multi-county area with up to six facilities each. The liaisons would report directly to Pat who would report to the department's leadership.

With the organizational structure in place, Pat persevered to increase participation and fundraising. Needless to say, with a coordinator at each institution, communication about the run increased. Participation went from just shy of 100 runners statewide in previous years to 610 in 2007. In 2008, participation jumped to 1230 with at least one department employee participating in every county where a run took place.

-- CONTINUED --

FLORDIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION'S STATEWIDE BARBEQUE FOR SPECIAL OLYMPICS

A HUGE SUCCESS!

With participation increasing, so did the sales of LETR merchandise. The department's proceeds increased from an average of \$16,000 annually to \$35,000 in 2007 to approximately \$60,000 in 2008. With the LETR merchandise being only part of the fundraising effort, they had to come up with another ideal that was unique to the department and would bring in lots of money. "When I was brainstorming about fundraising and what every institution and probation office could do, I kept coming back to what we do best...barbequing". So the Barbeque across the State was born.

The date of the barbeque is pre-selected to fall on a payday Friday towards the end of March, but prior to the start of Florida's Torch Run. Each institution and office is free to select their own menu



and pricing. Some barbeques are small in size, grilling only hamburgers and hotdogs while others are huge. At Century CI in Escambia County they cook up to 80 Boston Butt Roast, with half being used for pulled pork sandwich plates for dinner and the other half being sold whole for employees and town folk to take home for supper.

At Calhoun CI they set up at the intersection of busy highways 20 and 71 in Blountstown and provide curb side service to truckers. In Jacksonville,

they do a low country boil serving shrimp, oysters, muscles, sausage and corn. In Miami, palamilla bistec, red beans, rice and plantains are the way to go. Each place is different, but the results are huge. In the three years the barbeque has raised over \$145,000 for Special Olympics Florida bringing in \$40,000 in 2007, \$48,000 in 2008, and more than **\$57,800** this year!

When this event began three years ago, the sole purpose was to raise funds for Special Olympics Florida and bring awareness to the Special Olympics movement. The unintended benefit has been a morale boost for the agency by giving staff an opportunity to come together for a common cause. Staff look forward to this annual event and the continued growth has also highlighted the department's commitment to this wonderful organization and the athletes that participate in the many events it funds.

The Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics Takes the Challenge - 24

A UNIQUE FUNDRAISING IDEA!

Esporta Health Club in Holywood, Northern Ireland, was the venue for a recent Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics fund raising initiative. The Torch Run Challenge 24, took place from midday on Friday 27th March through midday on Saturday 28th March 2009, with the challenge being completing 16 half hour sessions in 24 hours on gym machines!!

Twenty four police officers from across Northern Ireland, Torch Run committee members and three invited guests took up the challenge of rowing, running, cross training and cycling a half hour then resting for an hour before their next half hour session. Torch Run Committee member and event organizer Constable Gareth Mckeown, approached Esporta about hosting the challenge in order to raise funds for the Special Olympics Ulster Regional Games taking place in Letterkenny in June 2009.

Special Olympics athlete and resident DJ for the event was Grant Wilson, who provided motivation along with James Neeson, Special Olympics athlete from Maghera and Idaho Final Leg Runner, who joined the competitors to successfully complete the challenge, a superb achievement.

The premier location of Esporta Health Club, together with the dedicated staff and inspiration of Special Olympics athletes taking part in the challenge, helped all competitors to complete the challenge. PSNI Torch Run Director, Assistant Chief Constable Duncan McCausland OBE, joined the competitors and pulled on his t-shirt to take part in a session and then presented certificates to all participants.

Gareth Mckeown stated, "I am delighted with the success of the challenge, which has raised valuable funds for Special Olympics and I hope that the event will be able to happen again."



THE "STORY" OF SPECIAL OLYMPICS

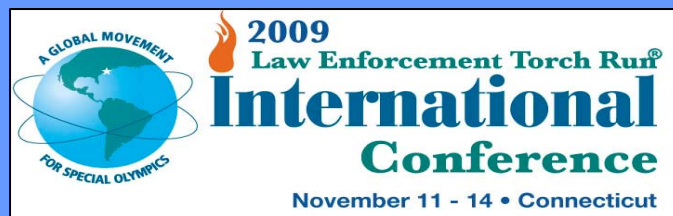
By: Debbie Apperson - Special Olympics Virginia Director of Development / LETR Liaison

I had the pleasure of attending the Region II Law Enforcement Torch Run Conference in New Jersey held on March 21st & 22nd with 100 other LETR members from our Region. The event was filled with networking, great Torch Run education and good ole' Torch Run fun. During the opening session, Marc Edenzon, CEO of Special Olympics New Jersey told the audience, "Special Olympics does sports. We don't do music or arts and crafts, we do sports, and we do it well!" This was evidenced during the unified basketball game which was held later in the afternoon. It had to be one of the most awe-inspiring, memorable moments, the kind that becomes ingrained in your being. Each team had 20 players, about half of the players were athletes and half were Torch Runners. The game was well played and the athletes were well-trained and excited to show their skills. The cops played just as unified partners should, they set-up plays and passed the ball. In most cases, they gave the athletes the opportunity to shoot - decidedly the most glamorous part of the game. At the end of the 3rd quarter, an athlete, from the 3 point line, sunk the ball into the basket.....swish!

To the untrained eye, it appeared to pass thru the rim just as the buzzer rang out and his team won the game by 1 point thanks to his amazing shot. Immediately, fans and players from both teams jumped to their feet and gave a rousing cheer. Without hesitation three cops/team members ran to center court, picked up the Special Olympics athlete, tossed him over their collective shoulders and did a victory dance. When they picked him up there was no hesitation, no consideration that he was "special" or that he had any kind of disability that would make their reaction any different than if that basket had been made by one of their buddies. For that moment, this young man was not a Special Olympics athlete; he was not a guy with an intellectual disability, he was a basketball player. He was the player who made 3 points in the last millisecond. A Special Olympics Virginia athlete, David Eagan recently said to me that he hopes that one day Special Olympics athletes are treated not as one among us, but as one of us. For a moment, this athlete fulfilled David's dreams. He had what everyone wants, acceptance for exactly who he is, truly capturing the "story" of Special Olympics.

REGION II TORCH RUN CONFERENCE AN OUTSTANDING SUCCESS!





THE TOP TEN REASONS

REASON #1: From the moment you step off your plane at Bradley International Airport (BDL) in Hartford, Connecticut a warm feeling of family, friendship and brotherhood will engulf your body and mind. A friendly greeting from our athletes, along with the men and women of law enforcement, will make you feel as if you never left home! Enjoy some refreshments in our airport hospitality area, located within the Sheraton Hotel at Bradley, prior to boarding one of the luxurious shuttles for your journey to Foxwoods Resort and the MGM Grand at Foxwoods – your home for the next 4 days. While onboard relax while listening to some of your favorite music and complimentary refreshments. Sheraton Hotel at Bradley will also be offering attendees a discounted rate should your flight be delayed and you arrive late in the evening or should you choose to extend your stay in the Hartford area.

REASON #2: Once you arrive at your destination – the MGM Grand at Foxwoods - (www.foxwoods.com) you will be entering into a whole new world of continual EXCITEMENT with state-of-the-art resort living; INDULGENCE with an array of world-class restaurants and celebrity chefs; ENTERTAINING with headline concerts, and thrilling sporting events; RELAXATION with the incomparable G-SPA and two challenging championship golf courses; and LUXURY with 825 ultra-modern guest rooms and 115,000 square feet of state of the art meeting space. In a word, it's GRAND!

REASON #3: At the Conference Registration area you will once again be greeted by our athletes, members of law enforcement, and one of our Conference Sponsors, the Knights of Columbus. See first hand, examples of our demonstration events and don't forget your "Official" 2009 Conference t-shirt and gift bag. The remainder of the day will be on your own – spend it at the spa or one of the 30 restaurants, or just stroll along the concourse that connects the three resort hotels.

REASON #4: New England Hospitality Night will be an event you will not want to miss! With no "pre-conference" event to attend or arrive early for –this evening will jump start a conference you will not forget! CASINO NIGHT in the Grand Pequot Ballroom begins promptly at 8pm. This evening of games, light fare, refreshments and prizes will greet you as you enter the massive ballroom which has been transformed into a casino. Try your hand at blackjack, roulette, craps, baccarat, the "Money Wheel" and of course, Poker! Buy-in is just \$25.00 for \$500 in chips (\$2,000 in chips for Poker) with prizes being awarded at all levels and simply for hitting the month or date of your birthday on Roulette. This event is for beginners, novices and advanced players. No pressure.

REASON #5: The Motivational, Educational and Inspirational factors will hit you from the outset as Thursday morning's Opening Ceremony encompasses the pomp and circumstance of this global movement with moving and informative video presentations, stirring speeches, and of course, Our Athletes! Stay Tuned for some surprises as well.

REASON #6: New England Host Night will simply astound you! Our venue will be the magnificent Mashantucket Pequot Museum, one of the largest Native American Museums in the country. Add great food, complimentary beverages and the sounds of Avenue Groove (our band you experienced in Dallas) and it should make for one unforgettable evening!

REASON #7: New and innovative concurrent sessions designed to educate, motivate, and inspire you to reach new heights – all in a new format.

REASON #8: A Live/Silent Auction with a New Twist! Our Auction Reception will be held from 4:30pm-7:00pm on Friday. A listing of the auction items we have secured to date can be seen by visiting our website www.soct.org More details on this event will be coming soon. The rest of the evening is on your own.

REASON #9: Our Demonstration/Fundraising Events will include:

- Our 5K will be a Torch Run – not a race or timed event.
We will incorporate a Walk with the Torch Run for those not wishing to run.
- Segway Challenge – obstacle course designed by our LETR Committee with the assistance of Segway. This will be fun!
- Ladder Golf with our Athletes

REASON #10: Our Goal is to Inspire, Educate and Motivate

Our Desire is to WOW You!

SEE YOU IN NOVEMBER!

OPERATION INAUGURAL LE TORCH RUN

GUANTANAMO BAY, CUBA

THE GTMO LE TORCH RUN MISSION: To introduce the Law Enforcement Torch Run to the Guantanamo Bay Naval Installation (GTMO) to 1. spread the word of Special Olympics through a unified global event, 2. raise funds to support Team USA and 3. honor a fallen brother.

The Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics New Jersey has a long range plan ... that is to spread awareness of Special Olympics programs and to continue to provide funds to support the free training and competition for every athlete involved in the program.

In meeting that goal, programs are ever expanding. But project GTMO may be the most unique expansion the New Jersey program has yet to undertake.

When Retired Camden Police Officer Gary Evangelista and NJ State Trooper Lou Kinkle first envisioned the venture, there were mountains to climb in terms of approvals from Special Olympics, Inc. and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Months later, with the final approval from the FBI, the GTMO LE Torch Run was set to go and Torch Run Director Robert Belfiore, Deputy Chief Port Authority New York/New Jersey; Evangelista; Andrew Johnson, Senior Director of Law Enforcement Sponsorship at Special Olympics New Jersey, and Chris McCormac, Special Olympics New Jersey athlete, brushed off their passports and headed to Cuba for the Inaugural Guantanamo Bay Naval Installation (GTMO) Torch Run.

It was decided that December 13, 2008 would be the date for the first ever Guantanamo Bay Torch Run which would benefit nearly 500 members of Team USA attending February's World Winter Games in Boise, Idaho by raising funds to purchase the highly collectable World Games pins for the athletes to trade with other athletes from around the world.



Members of the NJ LETR / SO program prepare for the Inaugural Guantanamo Bay, Cuba LE Torch Run with members of the military stationed on the base.

The GTMO Torch Run also would honor Major Dwayne M. Kelley, a member of the US Army and a NJ State Trooper who was killed in Iraq on June 24, 2008. Kelley died while supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The journey of the GTMO Torch Run was challenging. The 142 Torch Runners from the GTMO base gathered under the arch of the historic North East Gate of the Guantanamo Bay base before dawn and registered by the light of headlights from the cars parked nearby. As the Torch Run traveled the 10-mile mountainous route in 95 degree heat, volunteers were on hand to help smooth the way.

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OPERATION INAUGURAL LE TORCH RUN

GUANTANAMO BAY, CUBA



Special Olympics New Jersey athlete Chris McCormac, a member of the TEAM USA Floor Hockey team, proudly led the Torch Run alongside runners from the US Army – an honor he will never forget. “I was very proud to be included in the first Torch Run at Guantanamo Bay,” stated McCormac. “I had the privilege of being in the fine company of members of the Army, Navy, Air Force and FBI personnel. It was awesome running with the Army platoon. It was very inspiring to be involved in the Torch Run, and in the planning for the next one. I met a lot of friends that will last a lifetime.”

An official awards ceremony concluded the Torch Run, at which time everyone who helped to make the vision a reality was recognized. Included in the awards ceremony was a presentation made to Rear Admiral David Thomas, a survivor of the 9/11 Pentagon attack, who was presented with a World Trade Center flag for organizing the GTMO Torch Run. An official Torch Run plaque that displays the actual torch that was used during the

inaugural Torch Run event was presented to Captain Steven Blaisdell, the GTMO Base Commander.

Collectible Special Olympics minted coins were presented to FBI Agent-in-Charge Thompson; co-founder of the GTMO Torch Run Kinkle; Moral, Welfare and Recreation Director Craig Baisel; Set up and Volunteer Coordinator Sue Kinkle; FBI agent Christina Volker; JTF Commander Admiral Thompson, and others.

According to New Jersey Torch Run Director Belfiore, “When we first began Torch Runs 25 years ago, it was with the idea of giving back to the community by raising funds and awareness of the need for social acceptance for people who were classified as intellectually disabled. It didn’t take long before we realized that while we were successful in giving back, what we were getting back from the athletes was immeasurable. The athletes are truly the fuel that feeds our fire.”



Belfiore continued, “To have the opportunity to embrace an area of the military that was unfamiliar with the Torch Run with our focused goal of building awareness for the Special Olympics program was monumental. The Airmen, Sailors and Soldiers assigned to the GTMO base were thrilled to be a part of history and thrilled to join our mission. We got great support from the military personnel and from the FBI to roll out this new Torch Run. And what we found was that the members of the GTMO Torch Run, just like the athletes we’ve come to know over the years, give 100 percent of themselves 100 percent of the time. We are

honored to have the men and women involved in the GTMO Torch Run in our program, and we look forward to expanding their run and their experience with Special Olympics.”

2009 TORCH RUN EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

...

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Raleigh Police Department

Special Olympics Athlete Appointee (2010)

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IACP Appointee (2010)

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Special Olympics, Inc.

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Executive Council Appointee (2010)

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