

Nebraska Torch Run Handbook



**Special
Olympics**
Nebraska



**LAW ENFORCEMENT
TORCH RUN®**
FOR SPECIAL OLYMPICS
NEBRASKA



Event Description

The Nebraska Law Enforcement Torch Run (LETR) involves law enforcement officers from various agencies all across the state running the Special Olympics Nebraska (SONE) “Flame of Hope” throughout the state to raise money and awareness for SONE and the organization’s 6,000 athletes who have an intellectual disability. The LETR precedes the Summer Games, SONE’s largest state competition, which takes place annually in May in Omaha. During “Torch Run Week,” which is the Friday through Thursday before Summer Games, Torch Run ceremonies are held in many communities in Nebraska. The ceremonies consist of local law enforcement, athletes and community members running the Special Olympics torch in their communities and celebrating with SONE athletes, families, volunteers and supporters. At the end of Torch Run Week officers representing the various celebrations gather in Omaha to run the Flame of Hope into the Opening Ceremonies of Summer Games to light the event’s torch. This lighting of the torch represents the beginning of the Summer Games and brings joy and pride to the thousands of athletes, families, coaches and spectators who are a part of the Opening Ceremonies.

The lighting of the Summer Games torch is one of the great highlights of the Opening Ceremonies, but some of the loudest cheers of the night come when the Torch Runners present a check representing their annual donation to SONE. This check is a culmination of all the money raised by the (LETR) from events such as Polar Bear Plunges, Cop-on-Tops, T-shirts Sales and Tip-a-Cops. The money raised from the LETR allows SONE to continue to provide training, competitions and non-sports related programs for the athletes. The impact the LETR has on SONE is recognized by the participants, volunteers, staff and board of directors, and this is why the Torch Run across the state and the check presentation at Summer Games are such a large part of this state competition.

Law Enforcement/Planning Committee Responsibilities for Torch Run

The Nebraska Torch Run changed in 2009 from years of running the torch across Nebraska for five consecutive days to a week’s worth of individual runs and ceremonies in various Nebraska communities. This format makes it necessary for the LETR and SONE to have law enforcement serve as the main contact/organizer of their local community’s run and ceremony. The person who heads up their local Torch Run are not expected to organize and execute the run and festivities that go along with the run by themselves. It is expected that they bring together a group or committee in their community to work on all aspects of the run. This committee does not need to be made up only of law enforcement. Committees with diversity generally have more ideas, more contacts and more success in getting tasks done and accomplishing their goals. When forming the local Torch Run committees, please consider:



law enforcement personnel from a variety of agencies, law enforcement family members, Special Olympics athletes, families and/or volunteers and community members. Each Torch Run committee is responsible for the following:

- Selecting one day during Torch Run Week on which to hold their run and ceremony
- Planning a route for their Torch Run (i.e. running into and out of town, running through town, teaming up with a neighboring community to hold a run between the two towns)
- Organizing a ceremony at which the Torch Run and SONE athletes can be celebrated (i.e. picnic in park or at local business or school, piggyback with existing event in community, food and game/games with SONE athletes)
- Coordinating fundraising activity with Torch Run and/or ceremony (i.e. Torch Run t-shirt sales, raffle, good-will donations for picnic or activity, dunk-a-cop)
- Communicating ideas and plans with Nebraska LETR Directors and SONE Torch Run Liaison.
- Promoting Torch Run events locally

Special Olympics Nebraska Responsibilities for Torch Run

The Nebraska LETR is a partnership between law enforcement and the SONE state office. There is a SONE staff member designated to work with the LETR and serve as a liaison between the state office and the LETR. With the LETR directors, the Torch Run Liaison will work with the local Torch Run committees to ensure they receive the support and information they need to make their Torch Runs successful. Special Olympics Nebraska is responsible for the following:

- Consulting with Torch Run committee on ideas for run, fundraiser and ceremony
- Communicating with the local SONE teams on the Torch Run and ceremony plans
- Getting Torch Run shirts (both Runner and Fundraising) to community run coordinator or individual runners/sellers
- Promoting the Torch Run event through SONE social media and website and assisting with local media, if necessary



Special Olympics Nebraska Responsibilities for Torch Run (cont.)

- Giving the Torch Run committee SONE contacts in their community, if necessary (i.e. athletes, families, coaches to help organize athletes to be part of the ceremony or help to promote the local run and ceremony)
- Educating Torch Run committee on SONE financial procedures and bank deposits
- Providing any necessary office supplies to Torch Run committee (i.e. letterhead, envelopes, receipts)

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