

What is the Law Enforcement Torch Run?



“Tip-A-Cop” for Special Olympics Fact Sheet

What: A fund-raising event organized by The Law Enforcement Torch Run® for Special Olympics and a local restaurant in which law enforcement officers volunteer their time as “celebrity waiters” in restaurants and receive tips to raise funds for Special Olympics.

When: Anytime that is mutually agreeable between Lunch and Dinner shift(s) that is mutually determined by a restaurant manager and local law enforcement organizers.

Where: Any Restaurant throughout your community.

How:

- 1) Contact the Restaurant Manager at your local restaurant
- 2) Pick dates and shifts (e.g., lunch/dinner) that are mutually agreeable
- 3) Recruit 6 - 12 officers to volunteer for each shift (or however many the restaurant recommends or that you can get)
- 4) Law Enforcement “Celebrity Waiters” is introduced at each table by the food servers and the officers assist the servers with water service, setting tables, etc. It’s whatever you and the restaurant feels comfortable doing!
- 5) Restaurant staff and law enforcement volunteers explain “Tip-A-Cop” and ask customers to support the event by placing a special “tip” for Special Olympics in the envelope on their table Cash and checks can be put in the envelope and credit card info can be written in it securely

Why: “Tip-A-Cop” generates tremendous community goodwill and public awareness for Special Olympics and law enforcement. “Tip-A-Cop” allows Torch Run volunteers to involve their families and colleagues inside and outside the Torch Run community in a fund-raiser for Special Olympics.

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Tips for a Successful Event

- Identify a police officer at each restaurant location to be responsible for all necessary "Tip-A-Cop" components, including volunteers, shift assignments, liaison with the restaurant management and the Special Olympics office, handling media, counting money. That designated officer in charge can delegate out these duties if need be.
- Planning is critical to the success of the event. Contact a local restaurant manager immediately to mutually determine dates for "Tip-A-Cop." Meet with the manager prior to the event dates to ensure both of you are prepared.

Recruiting Volunteer "Servers"

- Begin recruitment of law enforcement "celebrity waiters" as soon as the event dates are determined. Ideally, you will need 6 to 12 officers for each shift, but recruit one or two extra in case someone is unable to attend.
- Keep in mind when recruiting that this is a great opportunity to involve retired officers and to recruit officers who do not participate in the Torch Run because they "do not run."
- One proven method of promoting within the agency is to announce that you are recruiting volunteers at meetings and pass out newspaper articles from the previous events where officers served as the wait staff, in your program.

Recruiting Customers

- Encourage the volunteer "servers" to have their friends, families, and co-workers attend the event. A lot of fun from the event comes from having the officers serve their own families or the supervisors serve their subordinates.
- Ask your local restaurant to advertise the upcoming "Tip-A-Cop" event on the reader boards (if they have them) in front of the restaurant. Advertise the event on the bulletin boards and newsletters in police agencies as well as in your Special Olympics newsletter.
- Contact your local Special Olympics program and ask that they let their volunteers, families, and athletes know of your "Tip-A-Cop" event.
- Contact your Public Information Officer in advance and explain the event to ensure maximum media exposure. See enclosed sample press releases.

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Bringing in the Bucks

- Experience shows that the most successful restaurants are those that had multiple shifts of "Tip-A-Cop"-- more than one lunch or dinner shift.
- Create a competition between the restaurants in your geographic area - bragging rights can go to the restaurant and/or agency that raise the most.
- Experience shows that your chances of success are dramatically improved if you have a high profile person (Chief, Sheriff, local celebrity, pro-athlete) or Special Olympics athletes at the door greeting and explaining the purpose of the evening.
- Some programs had success playing up the law enforcement angle. For example, a department mascot such as "Trooper Bear" could greet customers. One police department did fingerprinting on site. Badges, handcuffs, uniforms, police cars, and other law enforcement items add to the gimmick and keep customers' interest.
- The officers should be prepared to explain the "Tip-A-Cop" program and answer any questions about the Torch Run or Special Olympics. We have attached a "script" for the officers and fact sheets about the Torch Run and Special Olympics.
- You may want to give Torch Run pins or t-shirts for very large donations over a certain amount as a thank you.
- Provide finger printing or other identification programs for children.
- Send mass email to city/county employees asking them to attend.
- Have Special Olympic athletes attend in uniform as greeters at the door.
- Hang Torch Run & Special Olympics banners to increase awareness.
- On a dry erase board, keep track of how much was raised during each shift to increase competition.
- Offer a prize to the officer who earns the most tips.
- Bring Law Enforcement static displays such as Swat Lab, Canine Unit, Horses, etc...

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Additional Logistics of the Event

- You will need to have a flyer with information about The Torch Run and Special Olympics. You will also need a minimum of 250 envelopes to leave at the table for donations. You should also have a receipt book to provide patrons with a receipt for cash donations. SOVA has the flyers and the envelopes for your use. Please let us know the date of your Tip-A-Cop event well in advance so we can ship you the needed materials.
- Have your law enforcement volunteers arrive at the restaurant 45 minutes prior to the event to be briefed on their duties. Dress for the event should be a Torch Run t-shirt, uniform pants or khaki's and comfortable shoes. An agency or Torch Run baseball cap can also be worn, if available. Senior law enforcement officials in full uniform as greeters can have a strong impact on results.
- Keep the server duties for the officers simple. We suggest limiting the duties to drink refills and condiment delivery.
- After the guests have been seated and their orders taken, the officers will present written information about Special Olympics and an envelope for a "Tip-A-Cop" donation to Special Olympics; however, it must be stressed that the "Tip-A-Cop" donation is in addition to the "real" server's tip. The envelopes will be used for cash or check donations. Contact your SOVA Region Director to inquire about using a credit card reader for the event.
- Keep careful track of the donation envelopes. Establish a central drop point to secure the cash. You may wish to have a bucket at the front of the store and ask costumers to seal the envelope and drop it in whether they choose to donate or leave it empty so that they feel like their anonymity is guaranteed.
- At the end of the evening, have the officer in charge and an additional officer count the donations. Complete a deposit statement for the central torch run account. Deposit donations on the next business day. Or pass them on to your local Special Olympics office.
- It is also good to determine partial totals during the course of the event to keep the officers pumped up and motivated.
- The most important element is to HAVE FUN and remember the event is to support an excellent cause -- Special Olympics.

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Sample Script & Sequence of Events For Law Enforcement “Celebrity Waiters”

Officer greets customers at the table with the server and explains why he/she is there.

SAMPLE SCRIPT: *“Hello, I’m (name) and this is (server’s name). I will be assisting (server’s name) as part of the Tip-A-Cop program. The law enforcement community supports Special Olympics all over the world through the Law Enforcement Torch Run. Tip-A-Cop is a program we do in conjunction with this restaurant to raise money for Special Olympics. The general idea is that you are going to be so pleased with the service you receive today because of the assistance I am giving (server’s name), you will leave an extra tip for Special Olympics.”*

- The order is taken by the server and the officer assists server with the water/bread service. This is a good opportunity for chit-chat with the customers and to answer any questions they may have.
- Once the customer is finished with the meal, about the time they would order dessert/coffee if they are having any, the officer returns and gives the envelope and asks for a donation. The officer thanks the guests.

SAMPLE SCRIPT: *“I hope you had a great meal. On behalf of all of the law enforcement officers volunteering their time for Special Olympics during this national event, I hope that you will make a donation to help Special Olympics continue providing opportunities to train and compete in sports to people with intellectual disabilities. Here is an envelope if you care to make a donation. We would be happy to provide you with a receipt. If you would care to make a donation you can make it by cash, check, or credit. Your generosity is greatly appreciated. On behalf of (local Sheriff’s Office, Police Department, etc.) and Special Olympics, thank you.”*

- Servers collect envelopes and give to designated person in charge. The law enforcement officer in charge and an additional officer should count the money together and verify the exact amount collected.
- Donations should be deposited into the Central Torch Run account the next business day.

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Suggested Script for Greeters

Greeters are a wonderful way to involve local celebrities, top law enforcement officials, professional athletes, and Special Olympics athletes. Their purpose is to welcome customers to the "Tip-A-Cop" event and set the tone for a fun evening to benefit a great cause.

CHIEF/SHERIFF GREETER: Greet guests as they arrive and explain that local law enforcement and restaurant servers are working together to benefit Special Olympics.

SAMPLE SCRIPT: "Welcome, I'm (Sheriff/Chief ____). Thanks for coming to (name of restaurant) you're in for a real treat. You're going to experience some service like you've never seen! Tonight, (name of restaurant) servers will be assisted by your local (Sheriff's Office/Police Department, etc.) all to benefit Special Olympics."

ATHLETE GREETER: Greet guests as they arrive, tell them that you are a Special Olympics athlete and explain that local law enforcement and the restaurant servers are working together to benefit Special Olympics.

SAMPLE SCRIPT: "Welcome, I'm (name) and I am a Special Olympics athlete from (town/county). I am proud to welcome you the Tip-A-Cop event for Special Olympics. Tonight you're in for a real treat. The servers will be assisted by our local law enforcement from (Sheriff's Office/Police Department) all to benefit Special Olympics!"

LOCAL CELEBRITY/PRO-ATHLETE: Greet guests as they arrive and explain that local law enforcement and the restaurant's servers are working together to benefit Special Olympics.

SAMPLE SCRIPT: "Welcome, I'm (name). Thanks for coming to (name of restaurant) tonight, you're in for a real treat. I am proud to welcome you the Tip-A-Cop event for Special Olympics. You're going to experience some service like you've never seen! Tonight, the servers will be assisted by your local (Sheriff's Office/Police Department, etc.) all to benefit Special Olympics."

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“Tip A Cop” Ideas for Media Coverage

- Contact your local Public Information Officer in advance and explain the event to ensure their support for maximum media exposure. The media is usually very receptive to PIO information. Ask your PIO to do media releases for the event.
- Coordinate with the Media/PR staff person from your Special Olympics program office.
- Invite local television and radio stations to do live remotes from the “Tip-A-Cop” events.
- Send information to local papers, television, and radio stations for calendar listings.
- Personalize the enclosed press release to include information about your local Torch Run program and local Special Olympics athletes.
- If it is possible, coordinate with nearby jurisdictions to hold a “Tip-A-Cops” on the same days to maximize publicity.
- Ask your Torch Run Liaison for a list of the papers that ran stories on Torch Run Events last year. These papers should be among the first contacted about this year’s event, since they have supported and covered the event in the past.
- Remember, the media will cover stories that they think are interesting and important to their consumers. You want to convince them that Special Olympics, the Law Enforcement Torch Run® and the restaurant support of “Tip-A-Cop” matters to the public.
- Involve local politicians, celebrities, and top law enforcement officials as greeters and include this in your information to the media.

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Sample Event Press Release #1

This is just a suggestion. Please modify this press release to meet your needs.

{Date}

{Contact Name}

{Contact Phone}

"TIP-A-COP" ADDS UP TO BIG BUCKS FOR SPECIAL OLYMPICS

(Name of Restaurant) Teams Up With Law Enforcement for Cops & Lobsters Events; Law Enforcement Officers Serve Guests and Earn "Tips" For Special Olympics

{CITY, State} – On {date/s} law enforcement officers and local officials will take their oath to "serve" and protect to a new level, trading in their handcuffs and badges for menus and serving trays to assist servers at {name of restaurant} during {lunch and/or dinner}. Donations, in the form of tips, will benefit local Special Olympics Programs and the Law Enforcement Torch Run®. The Torch Run is part of a year-round, grassroots fundraising campaign by law enforcement agencies to benefit their local Program.

Last year, hundreds of officers participated throughout Virginia in similar events and raised a record \$____. "The relationship between law enforcement officials, {name of restaurant} and Special Olympics is a wonderful example of how corporations can help the communities in which they serve," said Tim Shriver, president and CEO of Special Olympics. "Through the support of communities across the nation, local Special Olympics athletes will be able to continue to benefit from quality Special Olympics programs and athletic opportunities."

{Quote from local S.O. or law enforcement representative}

{Name of restaurant and details about the business}

Special Olympics is an international year-round program of sports training and competition for individuals with intellectual disabilities. More than one million athletes in over 160 countries train and compete in 26 Olympic-type summer and winter sports. {Facts about local S.O. Program}. There is no cost to participate in Special Olympics. The Law Enforcement Torch Run® for Special Olympics is the largest grassroots fund-raising and public awareness vehicle for Special Olympics in the world. Each year officers carry the Flame of Hope through the streets of their hometowns and countries and deliver it to their local, state, or national Special Olympics Games. {Facts about local Torch Run Program}.

Visit Special Olympics online at {www.specialolympicsva.org, or www.torchrun.com}

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Special Olympics Fact Sheet

Special Olympics is an international program of year-round sports training and athletic competition for more than one million children and adults with intellectual disabilities.

The Special Olympics oath is ... *Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.*

Our mission is ... to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for individuals with intellectual disabilities by giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

Our goal is ... for all persons with intellectual disabilities to have the chance to become useful and productive citizens who are accepted and respected in their communities.

Our leaders are ... Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Founder and Honorary Chairman, and Sargent Shriver, Chairman of the Board.

The benefits ... of participation in Special Olympics for people with intellectual disabilities includes improved physical fitness and motor skills, greater self-confidence, a more positive self-image, friendships, and increased family support. Special Olympics athletes carry these benefits with them into their daily lives at home, in the classroom, on the job, and in the community. Families who participate become stronger as they learn a greater appreciation of their athlete's talents. Community volunteers find out what good friends the athletes can be. And everyone learns more about the capabilities of people with intellectual disabilities.

The Spirit of Special Olympics—skill, courage, sharing, and joy—transcends boundaries of geography, nationality, political philosophy, gender, age, race, or religion.

Special Olympics began ... in 1968 when Eunice Kennedy Shriver organized the First International Special Olympics Games at Soldier Field, Chicago, Illinois, USA. The concept was born in the early 1960s when Mrs. Shriver started a day camp for people with intellectual disabilities. She saw that people with intellectual disabilities were far more capable in sports and physical activities than many experts thought. Since 1968, millions of children and adults with intellectual disabilities have participated in Special Olympics.

Around the world ... there are accredited Special Olympics programs in 160 countries. Special Olympics programs are continually being developed around the world.

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To be eligible to participate ... in Special Olympics, you must be at least eight years old and identified by an agency or professional as having one of the following conditions: intellectual disabilities, cognitive delays as measured by formal assessment, or significant learning or vocational problems due to cognitive delay that require or have required specially-designed instruction.

The Unified Sports® program ... brings persons without intellectual disabilities together on the same team with persons with intellectual disabilities of comparable age and athletic ability. Founded in 1987, Unified Sports® fosters the integration of persons with intellectual disabilities into school and community sports programs.

Special Olympics provides year-round training ... and competition in 24 sports. Special Olympics has developed and tested training programs that are outlined in a Sports Skills Guide for each sport. More than 140,000 qualified coaches train Special Olympics athletes.

By assigning athletes to divisions ... commensurate with their ability, Special Olympics gives every athlete a reasonable chance to win. Athletes from all divisions may advance to Chapter, National, and World Games.

Special Olympics competitions ... are patterned after the Olympic Games. More than 15,000 Games, meets, and tournaments in both summer and winter sports are held worldwide each year. World Games for selected representatives of all programs are held every two years, alternating between summer and winter.

More than 500,000 volunteers ... organize and run local Special Olympics programs, serving as coaches, Games officials, drivers, and in many other capacities. Anyone can learn how to participate through the many training programs Special Olympics offers for coaches, officials, and volunteers.

Headquartered in Washington, D.C., ... Special Olympics Inc. guides local, area, state, and national programs around the world. A volunteer board of directors determines international policies and is comprised of business and sport leaders, professional athletes, educators, and experts in intellectual disabilities from around the world.

Giving cooperation and support ... to Special Olympics are the national governing bodies and/or international sports federations of each sport played in Special Olympics. Major sports organizations and a host of world leaders also support Special Olympics and its goals.

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Law Enforcement Torch Run® for Special Olympics Fact Sheet

Each year, law enforcement officers from across the state raise funds for Special Olympics Virginia (SOVA) by conducting the Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics. Since 1986, when the Virginia Law Enforcement Torch Run began, it has grown consistently every year. In 2019, law enforcement officials raised over \$1,305,000! Through the efforts of you and thousands of other officers, deputies and Department of Corrections officials, the Virginia Law Enforcement Torch Run has contributed more than \$22.5 million to Special Olympics athletes in Virginia since its inception and worldwide Torch Run has raised over \$733 million.

The Torch Run (LETR) in Virginia involves more than 2,000 law enforcement officers from over 300 agencies who take part in an over 2000 mile, 8 day torch relay to pass the Special Olympics "Flame of Hope" across Virginia. All of the relays converge in Richmond in June for the lighting of the cauldron during the Special Olympics Virginia Summer Games Opening Ceremonies.

The Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics, the largest grassroots fundraising program benefiting Special Olympics, began in 1981 when Wichita, Kansas Police Chief Richard LaMunyon saw an urgent need to raise funds for and increase awareness of Special Olympics. The idea for the Torch Run was to provide local law enforcement officers with an opportunity to volunteer with Special Olympics in the communities where the officers lived and worked. After three years of successful runs in Kansas, Chief LaMunyon presented his idea to the International Association of Chiefs of Police, which endorsed Special Olympics as its official charity through the Torch Run. Today, all 50 states and more than 40 countries have their own versions of the Torch Run. In Virginia, the first Torch Run was organized in 1986 when relays were run from Northern Virginia, Harrisonburg, and Tidewater to Richmond to the University of Richmond, site of the Special Olympics Virginia Summer Games. Today, the Torch Run has grown into the most important fundraising effort of Special Olympics Virginia. Since its inception, the Torch Run has continued to reach new records in fundraising efforts every year. Currently, the VA Torch Run is recognized as one of the top ten fundraising Torch Run Programs in the World. Along with being the premier fundraising event for Special Olympics Virginia, it is also the most visible event in Special Olympics.

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What to Emphasize When Writing or Speaking About Special Olympics

- Special Olympics provide year-round sports training and competition for children and adults with Intellectual disabilities or closely related developmental disabilities. These athletes who may or may not have a physical disability, represent programs from over 160 countries from all the major continents.
- Special Olympics operates on funds raised at the international, national, state and local levels from corporations, individuals, special events and grants. Special Olympics is sports, competitions and socialization; meaning the benefits include not only fitness, coordination and cardiovascular improvements, but also confidence, discipline, self-esteem and fun.
- From the start, Special Olympics has made training the priority and has established strict guidelines to insure that every athlete receives quality training before competing.
- To improve the quality of training, Special Olympics instituted a program of coaches training and curriculum and certification in 1981
- Every athlete who competes in Special Olympics events will compete against athletes of similar ability, since athletes are placed in competition divisions according to previous times or scores, age and where appropriate, gender.
- Special Olympics serves the needs of athletes of all ability levels, including those with more severe intellectual disabilities or closely related development disabilities and those having physical disabilities in addition to intellectual disabilities; and high-functioning athletes who may be able to move into mainstream sports or participate in Unified Sports® Leagues.
- Special Olympics Outreach is an on-going movement . . . the natural evolution of a program which began small and gained momentum rapidly to spread around the world. Special Olympics programs in the past five years achieved goals of improving the quality of competitions and training; of offering age appropriate sports; and developing programs for all ability levels, and that now - thanks to the dedication and hard work of Special Olympics staff and volunteers - the system is in place to reach out.
- Worldwide, there are an estimated 190 million people with intellectual disabilities, seven million in the US.

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Appropriate terminology:

- A person has an intellectual disabilities, rather than is suffering from, afflicted with, or a victim of an intellectual disability.
- A person uses a wheelchair rather than is confined or restricted to a wheelchair.
- Distinguish between adults and children with intellectual disabilities. Use adults or children, or older or younger athletes.

Terminology to avoid:

- Do not use the label "kids" when referring to Special Olympics athletes. Adult athletes are an integral part of the program.
- Do not use the adjective "unfortunate" when talking about persons with intellectual disabilities.
- Disabling conditions do not have to be life-defining in a negative way.