

LETR Event History

In 1981, Wichita Police Chief Richard LaMunyon joined forces with Kansas Special Olympics and conceived the idea for the first Law Enforcement Torch Run. Today, hundreds of thousands of citizens of the United States and more than 50 foreign countries can witness the Olympic Torch being carried by dedicated members of law enforcement through their communities on its journey to the Opening Ceremonies of the Special Olympics Summer Games in their corner of the world.

Over the years Chief LaMunyon's inspirational idea has evolved into *the single largest fund-raising event* and *the most highly successful public awareness campaign* in the history of Special Olympics. In 1998, the Law Enforcement Torch Run raised nearly \$11 million dollars for Special Olympics worldwide.

In Louisiana, the Law Enforcement Torch Run began in 1985 under the leadership of former Plaquemine Parish Sheriff, Ernest P. Wooton. A mere handful of officers carried the Olympic Torch to the Opening Ceremonies of the State Summer Games, which were held at Southeastern Louisiana University in Hammond.

Under the leadership of Sheriff William Earl Hilton, the Torch Run has grown to include approximately 2,000 law enforcement officers. These selfless individuals are appropriately named "**Guardians of the Flame**" and still, today, proudly carry the Olympic Torch. The Monday preceding the Special Olympics Louisiana State Summer Games, Law Enforcement Officers from virtually every corner of the state begin their 1,000 mile run to deliver the Olympic Torch to the Opening Ceremonies of the State Summer Games.

Throughout the year, and across the state, Torch Run officers conduct fund-raising activities. These events are as varied and unusual as the phenomenal funds received. The steadily increasing money raised from the Torch Run each year enables more children and adults to participate in Special Olympics.

"The Torch Run involves more of the community and introduces more friends to Special Olympics than any other Special Olympics event I've known."

Committee Structure & Key Volunteers

The Louisiana Torch Run Executive Committee meets monthly and is comprised of law enforcement officers from police departments, sheriffs' offices, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, probation & parole, district attorneys' offices, Louisiana Wildlife Agents, and Louisiana State Police, to name a few. Each member has several years of experience as a Torch Run participant. In addition, these officers conduct fund-raising events throughout the year and volunteer their time to educate the public about the capabilities of the intellectually disabled.

Leadership for the Law Enforcement Torch Run is provided by highly motivated and committed volunteers. Some include:

Honorary Torch Run Committee:

General Bennett C. Landreneau
Adjutant General Louisiana National Guard

Secretary James LeBlanc
Department of Corrections

Colonel Michael Edmonson
Louisiana. State Police

Colonel Winton Vidrine
Louisiana. Department of Wildlife
Enforcement

Chief Christopher Elg
West Monroe Police Department

Sheriff Steve May
Caldwell Parish Sheriff's Office

Fire Chief Butch Browning, Jr.
Louisiana State Fire Marshal

LETR State Director
Deputy Sara Hawkins
Morehouse Parish Sheriff's Office

For more information on how to get your agency involved please call:

1-800-345-6644 or go to laso@laso.org

