

GUARDIANS OF THE FLAME



Happy New Year!

Thank you for making 2022 an AMAZING year! We couldn't have done this year without our amazing partners of the Law Enforcement Torch Run.

Please join us in celebrating, and remembering, the last few months of 2022 with some of our favorite images down below.



Please click [here](#) to take our Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) Survey.

**Special
Olympics**
New York



John Prewasnicak—Statewide Director

First, we would like to take a moment to thank Rick Allen for serving as our courageous LETR Statewide Director for the last few years. Rick served as a great leader of the committee, and his passion for LETR and SONY never wavered, even as he led the team through an unexpected health pandemic. Thank you, Rick!

Now, we would like to congratulate John Prewasnicak, Retired Lieutenant with the Rochester Police Department, on his position as the new LETR Statewide Director!

John Prewasnicak has been with the New York Law Enforcement Torch Run for 11 years. Pre represented New York in the 2018 Final Leg run in the state of Washington, has attended a Region II LETR Conference in Virginia, and has attended many LETR International Conferences - Orlando, Phoenix, Las Vegas, Denver, and Round Rock.

In his experience with LETR, Pre has found the most meaningful moments to be between athletes and law enforcement establishing relationships, especially through Unified Sports. In his role as LETR Statewide Director, Pre hopes to raise the number of Honorary Athletes on the Statewide Committee to at least two, as it would enhance the relationship between LETR and SONY.

Pre has formed a wonderful bond with SONY athlete Jacob Babcock, who is on the Statewide Committee, which has encouraged Pre to participate in many more LETR and SONY events. Since being retired, Pre has gotten involved in coaching and participating in Unified Sports, which has inspired him to welcome the opportunity and the challenge of being LETR Statewide Director.



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2022 Law Enforcement Torch Run International Conference:

Several LETR members for Special Olympics New York attended the 2022 LETR International Conference in Round Rock, Texas, in early November. Members attended inspiring sessions to enhance the relationship between LETR and SONY, by learning about new ways to fundraise, why they support Special Olympics, interacting with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and different methods to recruit, and engage. All who attended the conference are excited to take what they've learned, bring it back to New York, and continue growing the relationship between LETR and SONY to better serve our athletes.



"The International LETR conference gave me so many ideas for what we can do in New York to improve our program, and how we can expand our reach. I came back with a notebook full of ideas, and most importantly, I came back with a burst of excitement and motivation to make those ideas become a reality..."

I was able to participate in a massive Torch Run with officers and athletes from all over the world, play in Unified Games with athletes, attend breakout sessions full of information, and take in emotional and inspiring presentations given by athletes, and others, committed to Special Olympics and our athletes. The conference motivates me beyond description, and it was my absolute pleasure and honor to be able to attend as representation of LETR NY. Anyone who gets the chance to attend one of these conferences will no doubt be inspired and gain a better understanding of the history of LETR and what it's all about." - Barry Banfield, Ithaca Police Department

"This was my first year having the honor of attending the International Conference. Everything about it was so inspiring. Every speaker was able to offer their own victories, near misses, and future ideas. It will all be useful as we go back to our State Committees and plan ways to raise awareness and funds for our great athletes.

The cherry on top of everything for me was the Unified Games. I had so much fun being paired up with Clara on our team as she showed off her skills. I still smile as I remember that gorgeous Texas day and the laughter and cheers that filled that parking lot.

I look forward to attending future conferences and sharing my own experiences. I can only hope that others gained as much as I did during our Austin visit.

Thank you Special Olympics and thank you Austin!" - Shaun Cuddeback, Jefferson County Sheriff's Office

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Quarter 4 Polar Plunge Recap:



Buffalo Polar Plunge:



Congratulations to our LETR leaders of the Buffalo Polar Plunge for not only maintaining the role of top plunge in the state, but also crushing all previous records, raising an incredible \$454,846 with over 1,300 Plungers! Increased participation also lead to over \$75,000 in sponsorships for the event.

Thank you to our presenting sponsor, Towne Automotive Family of Dealerships! The Cool School Polar Plunge on Friday afternoon saw nearly 20 school districts and hundreds of students representing the Inclusion Revolution. By empowering our Unified Champions Schools and providing these students with, and without, intellectual disabilities a leadership opportunity and fun event, they in turn raised an incredible \$150,000 with three districts raising over \$20,000 each.

Westchester Polar Plunge:



Total Raised: \$270,407

Plungers: 1,400

Recognition: Thank you to Iona Prep (top school in NYS), Somers High School (#2 school in NYS), Ursuline High School, Holy Child of Rye High School, Team Eastchester, George's Goosebumps, Yonkers Police (Joe and Dave Barca), and Team Lauren (athlete)!

Town of Brookhaven Polar Plunge:

Total Raised: \$130,000

Plungers: 560

Recognition: Thank you to Sachem (\$25,000), and to our top fundraising law enforcement team, Suffolk County Correction Officers Association (\$5,700).



Lake George Polar Plunge:

Total Raised: \$180,000

Plungers: 600

Recognition: Benson's Pet Center



Hudson Valley Polar Plunge:

Total Raised: \$18,000

Plungers: 88

Recognition: Warwick Valley Wildcats



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Quarter 4 Polar Plunge Recap:

Binghamton Polar Plunge:

Total Raised: \$24,000

Plungers: 84

Recognition: Thank you to the New York State Police, Chenango Valley State Park, CSEA, Guthrie, NYSUP at Binghamton, Dunkin', Police Benevolent Association of New York State, Inc., Visions FCU.



Town of Huntington Polar Plunge:

Total Raised: \$22,804

Plungers: 105

Recognition: Thank you to top teams and sponsors—The Chillers, Finley Takes the Plunge, The Supervisor's Office, Elwood Knights, Santa and the Misfit Toys, John's Crazy Socks, Huntington Chamber of Commerce, Yes Men Outfitters, LaRog Productions.



Staten Island Polar Plunge:

Total Raised: \$102,234

Plungers: 479

Recognition: Thank you to top teams and sponsors—Team Manresa, Hill Koalas, Packer Collegiate Institute, Team BCW, Bay Ridge Beached Whales, King's County Crusaders, BCW New York, Jersey Mike's/Prospect Capitol Restaurants!



Oneida Shores Polar Plunge:

Total Raised: \$110,000

Plungers: 395

Recognition: Thank you to OCSO, NYSUP at Upstate, Coca-Cola, Century Heating, Dunkin', CSEA, NYSCOPBA, Tito's Handmade Vodka, Onondaga County Parks, Oneida County PBA, Mid-State CF, Diane Budnar.



Canandaigua Polar Plunge:

Total Raised: \$30,000

Plungers: 50

Recognition: Thank you to Nolan's on Canandaigua Lake, New York State Police, Canandaigua Country Club, Dixon Schwabl, Northwestern Mutual, Young Lion, FLCC Lake Monsters, Garrett's Guardians, and Freezing Cold Ginger.



2023 Upcoming Polar Plunge Dates:

- **February 4th:** North Hempstead Polar Plunge
- **February 5th:** Rochester Polar Plunge
- **February 18th:** Fishkill Polar Plunge
- **March 11th:** Rockaway Queens Polar Plunge
- **March 25th:** Ithaca Polar Plunge
- **March 25th:** Town of Oyster Bay Polar Plunge
- **April 22nd:** Splish Splash Polar Plunge

Visit www.polarplungeny.org for more information and to register today!

If you do not see your Polar Plunge here, please reach out to your regional development staff for more information.



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Recent LETR Events:

2022 Tully's Law & Orders Night:

On Wednesday, October 19th, Tully's across the Western, Genesee, Central, and Southern Tier Regions hosted the 2nd Law & Orders Night of the year.

Thanks to some of our favorite local LEO's and Special Olympics Athletes, the event raised nearly \$13,000!



2022 State Fall Games:

Law enforcement from across the state joined Special Olympics New York and our athletes October 21st-22nd to celebrate State Fall Games in Glens Falls.

Our Guardians of the Flame carried the "Flame of Hope" into Opening Ceremonies, handed out awards on Saturday, and concluded Closing Ceremonies with sending the torch off to Syracuse for Winter Games in February.



Cornell Basketball SONY Night:

Local athletes and law enforcement competed in a halftime show during the Cornell University men's varsity basketball vs Lehigh University game!

10 duos consisting of a local law enforcement officer and a Special Olympic athlete had 1 minute to make as many baskets as possible. Local sponsors pledged to donate \$10 to Special Olympics New York for every basket the duo made. The halftime show raised over \$1,000!



For more upcoming events, please click



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Meet our Statewide Committee:

Congratulations to our NEW Statewide LETR Director, John Prewasnicak.

Please welcome Chelsea Giovio from Oswego City Police Department, and Mary Orsaio with Ithaca Police Department to the committee as of September 2022.

John Prewasnicak—Director; Retired Lieutenant, Rochester Police Department

Jacob Babcock—Athlete Representative; Genesee Region

Capital District Region

Scott Leslie

Central Region

Chris Koeppe

Shaun Cuddeback

Paul Waltz

Mike Murray

Chelsea Giovio

Genesee Region

Erin Rogers

Mike Favata

Sal Gerbino

Rick Allen

Hudson Valley Region

Chris Hamel

Joe Barca

Dave Barca

Long Island Region

Mike Neid

New York City Region

Kevin Dean

North Country Region

Sue Ewing

Brian Coakley

Scott Ewing

Wendy House

Southern Tier Region

Barry Banfield

Joseph Peters

Aga Dembinska

Neil Case

Mary Orsaio

Western Region

Steve Nigrelli

Jeff Wilson

Jim Koch

Mike O'Bryan

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