

## ***Law Enforcement Torch Run***

Kansas is the only state that can proclaim:  
**First to Carry the Torch and Still Lighting the Way!**

The Law Enforcement Torch Run® began here in Kansas in 1981 when Wichita Police Chief Richard LaMunyon saw a need to raise funds for and awareness of Special Olympics Kansas. Chief LaMunyon felt that Special Olympics was a fitting cause to unite local law enforcement agencies, giving them closer ties to the community at large and to a very special population.

In 1984, after three years of successful Torch Runs in Kansas, Chief LaMunyon presented his highly successful Torch Run program to the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), whose enthusiastic support enabled the Torch Run to expand into a national event. Celebrating its 25th Anniversary in 2006, the Law Enforcement Torch Run® for Special Olympics is the movement's largest grass-roots fundraiser and public awareness vehicle.

Each year, the odds are overwhelming. Across the United States, law enforcement officers carry the Special Olympics Torch on inter-state relays, running for a common cause to bring the Torch to the Opening Ceremonies of their state's Summer Special Olympics Games. One hundred percent of funds raised directly benefit the athletes of Special Olympics Kansas.

The Merriam Police Department began participating in the Law Enforcement Torch Run® in 1984 with two officers, Chief Bill Lietzke and Captain Tim Burnett. Over the years, the Merriam Police Department has reached the highest award level there is to offer to agencies each year since its inception, the Diamond Award of Excellence. This award is given to an agency which has raised over \$15,000 for Special Olympics and has been given since 2008. We are proud to have two officers who have been inducted into the Richard LaMunyon Hall of Fame, Lieutenant Mike Daniels in 2004 and Captain Tim Burnett in 2008. Since its inception in 2005, the Merriam Police Department has also had at least one person make the "Top Gun" award list, which is the top 10 highest individual fundraisers in the state of Kansas.

The Merriam Police Department has not only participated in events but has helped shape the Torch Run as it is today. Members of the department helped create the Polar Bear Plunge and the Popcorn Standoff. The Polar Bear Plunge is the largest single fundraising event in the state and the Popcorn Standoff is the largest single fundraising event in Merriam. Our officers have also held the following positions within the Law Enforcement Torch Run®; State Director, Executive Council Member (Board of Directors), Northeast Regional Coordinator, Johnson County Regional Coordinator along with having sent a representative to the Special Olympics World Games in 2005 to Nagano, Japan.