

PRESS RELEASE



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CONTACT: Andrew Kauffman
Marketing & Communications Director
(480) 695-0592
Kauffman@somo.org

Champions Unite: SOMO to celebrate law enforcement heroes and reveal Drive it Home Raffle winner this Friday!

JEFFERSON CITY – The excitement is building as Special Olympics Missouri (SOMO) prepares to host the highly anticipated 2023 Law Enforcement Torch Run (LETR) Celebration Lunch at the prestigious Training for Life Campus on Friday, Dec. 1.

This event will celebrate dozens of law enforcement agencies across the state for their incredible fundraising and volunteer efforts in 2023.

"SOMO's invaluable partnership with law enforcement across the state is a testament to the extraordinary commitment we share," said Crystal Schuster, Sr. Director of Community Development at SOMO. "Throughout the year, these dedicated officers tirelessly champion awareness and fundraising efforts for SOMO athletes. Taking a moment to acknowledge and extend our heartfelt gratitude is not just appropriate but essential for recognizing their unwavering dedication."

This past October, a group of 30 LETR for SOMO members traveled to Chicago for the International LETR Conference. They were awarded the Diamond Award for raising nearly \$1.2 million in 2022! In 2023, the LETR for SOMO has already raised \$1.5 million with a month left to go.

During the International LETR Conference, Special Olympics Inc. announced a significant fundraising milestone of raising more than \$1 billion for the Special Olympics movement worldwide since its inception in 1981. Missouri's LETR started back in 1986. Since then, it has raised more than \$40.5 million for SOMO.

The day of celebration on Friday will kick off at 9 a.m. with law enforcement officers engaging in LETR training. There will also be a Missouri Police Chiefs Association meeting, adding depth and significance to the event.

The event will kick into high gear at 11 a.m. with the eagerly anticipated Drive it Home Raffle drawing, adding an exciting highlight to the festivities. This year, one lucky winner will receive a brand new 2023 Ford Explorer XLT 4WD. This year's Drive it Home Raffle fundraiser began back in June. The annual raffle is powered by the Missouri Automobile Dealers Association and LETR for SOMO. Since the raffle began, law enforcement agencies across the state have helped sell raffle tickets, raising more than \$110,000 for SOMO!

SOMO has already selected its six area finalists for the Drive it Home Raffle. They will all be present or have a representative for the finalist drawing on Friday. You can see the finalists below.

Southwest Area: Janet Jansen – Purchased her ticket at a Knights of Columbus event.

Kansas City Metro Area: Karen Kelly – Purchased her ticket from the Kansas City Police Department.

St. Louis Metro Area: Terry Wright – Purchased his ticket from the Webster Groves Police Department.

North Area: Stephanie Brockman – Purchased her ticket from SOMO athlete Pete Moore.

Central Area: Andrea Young – Purchased her ticket from her cousin, SOMO athlete Shirlene Treadwell.

Southeast Area: Marc Stout – Purchased his ticket from his cousin, SOMO athlete Lisa Berryhill.

After the drawing, SOMO will hold an awards banquet for roughly 200 members of law enforcement at 11:45 a.m. It is expected to conclude around 2 p.m.

"Bringing together our exceptional law enforcement partners, alongside SOMO staff, board members, and our inspiring athletes, the awards banquet serves as the ideal platform," Schuster said. "We're eagerly anticipating the moment to celebrate and honor them, recognizing the culmination of their dedicated efforts and outstanding achievements throughout the year."

During the banquet, SOMO will announce its 2023 John Michael Letz Award. This award is the highest honor given within the LETR for SOMO. It is our unsung hero award. The first recipient of this award was Ralph Biele, who was instrumental in starting the LETR for SOMO more than 30 years ago. The 2022 John Michael Letz award winner, Corporal Joe Peart, will announce this year's winner during the ceremony.

Thank you to our great sponsors for this event: Lighting Associates, Terry's Towing, LETR for SOMO and the Missouri Police Chiefs Association

Media Members can RSVP to Andrew Kauffman: Kauffman@somo.org.

Special Olympics Missouri

Special Olympics Missouri is a year-round program of sports training and athletic competition for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. Thousands of athletes participate in 16 Olympic-type sports throughout the state. Special Olympics provides people with intellectual disabilities continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage and experience joy as they participate in the sharing of gifts and friendship with their fellow athletes, their family and friends and communities across Missouri.

Special Olympics Missouri is proud of our financial health, returning 82% of every dollar back to program services. We are privileged to be recognized with these honors: Better Business Bureau A+ Charity Accreditation, Charity Navigator 4-star rating and Guidestar Gold Level. Special Olympics was also recently named Morning Consult's No. 4 most trusted nonprofit.

Thank you for trusting us with your donations, volunteer time and your goodwill.

Visit Special Olympics Missouri at www.somo.org. Engage with us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [YouTube](#).

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