

**For Immediate Release**

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**Special Olympics**  
Rhode Island



## **Special Olympics Rhode Island Announces Nominees of Inaugural Elwood Johnson Outstanding Service Award**

*Twelve members of the RI Law Enforcement Torch Run® community honored.*

**April 24, 2024 (Smithfield, RI)** – Special Olympics Rhode Island, a non-profit organization dedicated to providing year-round sports training and competition for individuals with intellectual disabilities, today announced the nominees of its inaugural Elwood Johnson Outstanding Service Award, recognizing 12 exceptional members of the Rhode Island Law Enforcement Torch Run (LETR RI) community. Established in honor of Elwood Johnson Jr., a dedicated supporter of Special Olympics Rhode Island and longtime law enforcement member, this award celebrates individuals who embody the spirit of philanthropy and community impact.

Nominated by their respective departments or agencies, these law enforcement professionals have demonstrated unwavering dedication to providing opportunities for athletes with intellectual disabilities to empower themselves and their communities. Each honoree has been recognized by their department or agency in collaboration with Special Olympics Rhode Island President and CEO, Ed Pacheco, as an Outstanding Service Award honoree, recently receiving a citation and Elwood Johnson Outstanding Service pin.

The statewide award winner will be announced on Friday, May 3 at the LETR RI's 2024 Conference.

The inaugural Elwood Johnson Outstanding Service Award honorees are:

- **John Benros**, Officer, Providence Police Department
- **Gregory Burbank**, Corporal, Westerly Police Department
- **Jason Cahill**, Lieutenant, Burrillville Police Department
- **Mac Hindle**, Officer, Hopkinton Police Department
- **Eric Leclerc**, Detective, Cranston Police Department
- **Frank Matarese**, Officer, Warwick Police Department
- **Sarah McNulty**, Lieutenant, Central Falls Police Department
- **Mario Mennella**, Officer, Johnston Police Department
- **Joshua Nelson**, Lieutenant, North Smithfield Police Department
- **Jon Ricciarelli**, Sergeant, Smithfield Police Department

- **Kyle Shibley**, Corporal, Rhode Island State Police
- **James Tiernan**, Major, West Greenwich Police Department

### **About the Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics Rhode Island**

Law Enforcement Torch Run® for Special Olympics (LETR) is a volunteer movement that was established by members of the law enforcement community to support Special Olympics. In Rhode Island, the movement includes law enforcement, corrections, fire, and justice departments. The LETR mission statement is to increase public awareness and raise funds for the Special Olympics movement worldwide.

LETR began in 1981, when Wichita, Kansas (USA) Police Chief Richard LaMunyon saw an urgent need to increase awareness of Special Olympics. He also saw it as an ideal way to get local law enforcement personnel involved with the Special Olympics community. The LETR was quickly adopted by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), the Founding organization of the Law Enforcement Torch Run® for Special Olympics. What started as a flicker more than 40 years ago has grown into a roaring flame of support and stability for Special Olympics athletes worldwide.

### **About Special Olympics Rhode Island**

Special Olympics Rhode Island (SORI) is a non-profit organization providing year-round sports training in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, 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. The organization serves over 3,500 athletes of all ages, races and genders. Along with the athletes, SORI offers involvement and support to family members and/or caregivers, along with hundreds of volunteers from high schools, colleges and companies from around the state.

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