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Romeoville Police Department a Big Supporter of Special Olympics Illinois

\$64,758. That's how much the Romeoville Police Department has raised for Special Olympics Illinois since 2018. With fundraising efforts being led by Officer Tom Dorsey, that number continues to go up by larger amounts each year.

Special Olympics Illinois raises money for athletes with intellectual disabilities. Gear, a venue to use, transportation: Special Olympics Illinois covers it all. It costs a lot of money for the equipment needed to take care of a special needs child. Many times there's no room for sports in the budget. That's where the fundraising comes in.

Every June, Special Olympics Illinois hosts their big event at Illinois State University (ISU). Much like the traditional Olympics, torches used to light the cauldron to start the games. Beginning the Monday before, officers from different parts of the state run multiple torches down to ISU in a relay race to get it there in time for the Friday ceremony. In Romeoville's case, they receive the torch from Bolingbrook, run down Route 53 to Airport Road, and hand it off to the Illinois Department of Corrections officers from Stateville Correctional Center.

Romeoville PD participates in other fundraisers for Special Olympics too. There's the Plane Pull, where teams compete to see who can pull an airplane a certain distance the fastest and the Polar Plunge, where teams get pledges in exchange for jumping into freezing water. Residents may be familiar with Cop On A Rooftop, the event that usually features officers on the roof of the Dunkin'. "It's really one of the most fun events that we do for public interaction," said Officer Dorsey.

The Five O Race sees current and retired police officers (the Five O) racing stock cars at a local track. In 2018, '19, '21, and '22 Dorsey drove a car built by Romeoville High School students and their auto shop teacher Pete Morris. In addition to Dorsey, Romeoville officers Jim Meyers, Brian Truhlar, and Estevan Gallardo have each gotten behind the wheel at one point.

In 2021, the Romeoville Police Department achieved a special goal of their own: \$19,000 raised in one year. That got them the title of Bronze Level Sponsor and a place on the 2022 Torch Run t-shirts. "It's always been my goal to get Romeoville on that t-shirt," said Dorsey. "We showed Illinois how much Romeoville supports Special Olympics because our name is on the back of every Torch Run shirt in the state." In 2022, they exceeded that amount, raising \$26,000. The goal for 2023: \$30,000.



"We are incredibly proud of the police department and their initiative in supporting such a great organization like Special Olympics Illinois," said Mayor Noak.

There is more behind all these events than being able to run with fire, stand on rooftops, and drive race cars. It all comes back to the athletes. "If my kids want to play sports, we have the means to do that," says Dorsey. "It's easy to forget that not everyone has that luxury or that ability." That's what drives him to keep pushing for higher fundraising numbers. "It's amazing to watch these athletes. They are competing against each other, but still cheer each other on. It just tells me that they are in it for the right reasons and they're doing it because they want to experience it. To be able to give them that opportunity is fantastic."

If you would like to help the Romeoville Police Department support Special Olympics Illinois and the athletic programs they provide, be on the lookout for these fundraising events as they come up throughout the year and pitch in! Our officers and, more importantly, our athletes, thank you.

2023 Upcoming Dates

March 11 – Polar Plunge @ Oakbrook Pool and Tennis Club

April 29 – Plane Pull @ Lewis University

May 19 – Cop on a Rooftop @ local Dunkin' stores