

Community shows support for Race for Plunkett, Special Olympics Ontario



The streets and trails of Newmarket were filled with energy and determination on Wednesday, August 6, as York Regional Police welcomed residents to the annual Race for Plunkett.

This special Law Enforcement Torch Run brought together law enforcement, athletes, families, and supporters to raise awareness and funds for Special Olympics Ontario.

The event, held along the scenic Tom Taylor Trail, offered participants the chance to run or walk either a five- or ten-kilometre route.

Registration fees and donations collected went directly to Special Olympics Ontario, ensuring athletes with intellectual disabilities have continued access to meaningful opportunities in sport and beyond.

This year's race raised an impressive \$30,000 with 29 participants taking part.

Before the race officially began, the Riverwalk Commons in downtown Newmarket came alive with music, police displays, commemorative photo opportunities, and the chance for participants to meet local Special Olympics athletes. Runners and walkers picked up their official Torch Run t-shirt, race kit, and electronic timing chip with anticipation.

At 6 p.m., a moving ceremony marked the official start of the evening. From the Riverwalk Commons stage, the iconic Flame of Hope—a symbol carried by law enforcement officers and Special Olympics athletes around the world—was proudly escorted into the crowd.

Local Special Olympics athletes had the honour of bringing the flame forward, and in that moment, every participant became a ?Guardian of the Flame,? joining a global community committed to inclusion and support. Together, the flame was carried 500 metres to the starting line at Fairy Lake Park.

The Race for Plunkett holds special meaning in York Region, named in memory of Detective Constable Rob Plunkett.

Plunkett, who was tragically killed in the line of duty in August 2007, had been a dedicated advocate for Special Olympics.

He served as Chair of the 2000 Special Olympics Spring Games in York Region and worked tirelessly to champion athletes and the cause they represent. For more than 35 years, York Regional Police have supported the Law Enforcement Torch Run, and the Race

for Plunkett ensures his legacy lives on.

Events like this are part of a much larger movement.

The Law Enforcement Torch Run is the single largest grassroots fundraiser for Special Olympics worldwide, with law enforcement officers in more than 30 countries carrying the Flame of Hope each year.

Funds raised not only help athletes compete but also empower them to build friendships, confidence, and life skills.

The evening closed on a note of hope, reminding everyone in attendance that when a community comes together, change is possible. The Race for Plunkett was more than a run; it was a heartfelt tribute, a fundraiser, and a symbol of what can be achieved when people rally behind a cause greater than themselves.

Those wishing to support Special Olympics Ontario through the Race for Plunkett can still register or donate by visiting yrp.ca/TorchRun.

By Brittany GrencoLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter