



## Alberta Guardian

# SAVE THE DATE

## 2020 KICK OFF CONFERENCE

### ALBERTA LAW ENFORCEMENT TORCH RUN

### NOVEMBER 2, 2019



On November 2<sup>nd</sup>, we will be hosting the 2020 Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics Alberta Kick-Off Conference in Leduc, Alberta. Once again we want to recognize you, our valued volunteers! We will start with a Meet & Greet on Friday evening and finish off with the Awards & Recognition Banquet on Saturday evening. Whether you're new and haven't come out yet or are a seasoned volunteer, we don't want you to miss out on this great opportunity to learn more about LETR and network with other great law enforcement members that support these amazing Athletes!

If you have any suggestions for breakout sessions please email [lsitler@specialolympics.ab.ca](mailto:lsitler@specialolympics.ab.ca)

Registration is now open. We will be providing rooms Friday and Saturday evening for the first 6 registrations from each region (outside the Edmonton region). Visit [www.specialolympics.ca/albertatorchrun](http://www.specialolympics.ca/albertatorchrun) to register today!

## PROVINCIAL DIRECTOR

We are still accepting application for a new Provincial Director that will take the helm for 2020. If you are interested in finding out more about this great opportunity please visit our website at: <https://www.specialolympics.ca/alberta-lettr/announcement/application-provincial-director>

## Upcoming Events

We are always looking for volunteers and committee members. Even if you have an hour or two to spare we hope you can come out! Please contact the event lead below if you would like to be part of our upcoming events. Thank you for helping us makes dreams a reality for over 3,200 Athletes across the province.

2019			LETR Lead
August 9, 2019	Bison Transport BBQ	Calgary	Claire Wiseman <a href="mailto:claire.wiseman@gov.ab.ca">claire.wiseman@gov.ab.ca</a>
August 9-11, 2019	Free our Finest	Airdrie	Melisa Eye <a href="mailto:melisa_eye@hotmail.com">melisa_eye@hotmail.com</a>
August 16-18, 2019	Free our Finest	Red Deer	Tracy Duval <a href="mailto:tracy.duval@shaw.ca">tracy.duval@shaw.ca</a> Brad Cotmen <a href="mailto:bpk_23@hotmail.com">bpk_23@hotmail.com</a>
September 7, 2019	Truck Convoy	Calgary	Claire Wiseman <a href="mailto:claire.wiseman@gov.ab.ca">claire.wiseman@gov.ab.ca</a>
September 13-15, 2019	Free our Finest	Wetaskiwin	James Jones <a href="mailto:James.Jones2@albertahealthservices.ca">James.Jones2@albertahealthservices.ca</a>
September 21, 2019	Cycle for a Cause	Calgary	Jordan Dugal <a href="mailto:Jordan.Dugal@gov.ab.ca">Jordan.Dugal@gov.ab.ca</a> Garrett Dawson <a href="mailto:Garret.Dawson@gov.ab.ca">Garret.Dawson@gov.ab.ca</a>
October 5, 2019	Lethbridge Police Service Half Marathon	Lethbridge	Braylon Hyggen <a href="mailto:braylonhyggen@gmail.com">braylonhyggen@gmail.com</a>

October 10, 2019	Wine and Craft Beer Tasting	Calgary	Theresa Manuel <a href="mailto:tmanuel@telusplanet.net">tmanuel@telusplanet.net</a>
October 26, 2019	Hero Run	Edmonton	Amanda Trenchard <a href="mailto:Amanda.Trenchard@edmontonpolice.ca">Amanda.Trenchard@edmontonpolice.ca</a>
TBD	Cops, Pops & Pizza	Lacombe	Jeff Hewitt <a href="mailto:jeffery.hewitt@rcmp-grc.gc.ca">jeffery.hewitt@rcmp-grc.gc.ca</a>
November 2nd, 2019	KickOff Conference/Volunteer recognition	Leduc	Lorrie Sitler <a href="mailto:lsitler@specialolympics.ab.ca">lsitler@specialolympics.ab.ca</a>
tbd	Cops, Pops & Pizza	Lethbridge	Mat Champagne <a href="mailto:mchampagne@taberpolice.ca">mchampagne@taberpolice.ca</a>

## Meet One of Our Great Volunteers - Forever a Guardian of the Flame

Sr. Constable Mathieu Champagne (right) at the Final Leg Torch Run in UAE | Photo courtesy of Mathieu Champagne



Sr. Constable Mathieu Champagne of the Taber Police Service recently acted as a Guardian of the Flame for the [2019 Special Olympics World Summer Games](#) and this role is one that he is proud of.

“It’s a huge responsibility and I have participated in Final Leg runs before, but nothing compares to what I participated in over that two weeks,” Mat said.

Mat is currently the Southwest Chair for LETR and has not missed an event in his region since 2013.

That year he was asked to take part in the annual 500km Provincial Bike Ride from Lethbridge to Edmonton.

And from that moment on he was hooked.

“I can’t get enough,” Mat said. “Whether I have time or not I make sure I am there. I just feel like we get back so much more as police officers participating in LETR events than we could ever give.”

“We get back tenfold what we put in for sure.”

Later that year he rode into the arena for the 2013 Provincial Games in Devon – one of his most memorable experiences as an LETR member.

“We rode into an arena there and just seeing all the spectators and coaches and athletes that were so excited to have us there that just got me so hooked on what I wanted to do and how I wanted to be involved in LETR,” Mat said.

While he has been involved in every event and enjoys all of them, Mat stated that his favourite is the Polar Plunge.

“To see everyone having such a great time and the athletes seeing us jump in there and freeze our butts off it is just such a great event.”

From March 3 to March 14, Mat was part of a team of nearly 120 LETR officers and Special Olympics athletes from around the world who were chosen to participate in the Final Leg Torch Run in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) leading up to #AbuDhabi2019.

Mat said he was floored when he received the call and was excited to represent Alberta LETR, even though he had some reservations about travelling to a place he knew almost nothing about

Over the 12 days in UAE Mat explained that they visited all of the emirates and participated in 44 ceremonies and 44 separate torch runs.

“They are doing things right in the UAE. They are doing things right for the Special Olympics. They are moving so far forward when you consider where they are in the planet in regards to culture and life and how not every country is very accepting and welcoming when it comes to inclusion, but the UAE is doing it right,” Mat stated.

“They are above and beyond and it just makes me believe that here in North America where we should be leading we should probably pick it up a bit.”

He advocated that he was blown away by the support from citizens, local police, and dignitaries who welcomed them at each ceremony and that he was lucky enough to speak in front of hundreds of media about what LETR meant to him.



Mat (Center) during one of the 44 runs that LETR officers and athletes took part in from Mar. 3 to Mar. 14 | Photo via MC

All of these experiences were special to Mat, but he added that nothing compared to the Opening Ceremonies.

**“To be there and to watch that flame come in and there was somewhere between 40 and 60 thousand people in the stadium, watching the Flame come in a light that cauldron to start the Games – that’s what it was all about. Hearing the people, seeing the people, all the athletes from around the world, 7500 taking up the entire floor plus the 40000 in the**

**stands. It just gives me chills to even think about it now and it's been [three] weeks since that happened."**

After his trip Mat is motivated to make every event he is a part of better here in Alberta.

For Mat, the LETR events are not simply about raising funds and awareness, but also about changing perspective

"If I can encourage my committee – we don't need more events, we just need to make ours better. We need to make them. We need to celebrate them more, have more athletes there. We need more interaction," said Mat.

"I want to make people hear the stories, see the athletes and be out there just welcoming. I want people to take the time to ask hey I heard about Special Olympics, what is this about."

Looking ahead, Mat does not expect to stop being a Guardian of the Flame any time soon, even after he hangs up his badge.

## **Meet one of the Athletes You Support - Justin Sitler is Swinging for the Fences with SOA and Safeway**



If there is one thing that we know about Justin Sitler, it is that inning after inning he is committed to putting in the hard work and swings for the fences on-and-off the diamond.

Since 2013 Justin has been lining up at the plate with Special Olympics Alberta with the Camrose affiliate.

The 25-year-old slugger has found his place as a member of the Cardinals softball team, and at Tabb Lanes he can be seen bowling strikes with the 5-pin team.

"I wanted to be active and be more social," says Justin on why he joined Special Olympics.

He has been bowling for the past 15 years and softball is something that has come naturally to him since starting with the Special Olympics program.

**"My favourite thing is hitting some good ones,"** says Justin. **"I've had a couple home runs."**

Justin has really gelled with the team and he stated that not only are the Cardinals great players, but they also help each other improve and push each other to be better.

He enjoys pushing himself to be his best and this mindset is one of the reasons why he decided to apply at the local Safeway in Camrose.

The decision has clearly paid off for Justin who, similar to his Cardinals team, has found a motivational and supportive team at Safeway.

"It has been so incredible to watch Justin's social skills grow since he began his job at Safeway in Camrose five years ago," says his mother Lorrie, who works as the Alberta Law Enforcement Torch Run Manager.

"Safeway has provided a caring environment where the staff and management understand his challenges but work with his strengths to ensure he is successful at work."

Justin likes to watch TV, especially one of his favourites, Battle Bots. He likes all kinds of games including card, video, board, and most other varieties.

Even through his hobbies, Justin likes to swing for the fence, whether it is working on his YouTube channel or improving at archery.

And he has applied this mentality to his experiences with Special Olympics.

Justin earned a bronze medal in softball at the 2013 SOA Summer Games in Devon and at the time he admits he was a little disappointed.

However, he has become more appreciative of that medal over the last few years as it was a symbol of a new goal - to keep trying your hardest.

He used this bronze as motivation to improve with his teammates and his hard work paid off as they won the gold at the 2017 Provincial Games in Medicine Hat.

Justin is using his experience to inspire other athletes to join the movement.

"Well, I would say pick a sport that you think you would do good in and then work your way up," says Justin.

And if you wanted any proof that this advice is golden, then look no further than Justin.

If you want more information on upcoming events visit our website

<https://www.specialolympics.ca/albertatorchrun>

Email: [albertatorchrun@gmail.com](mailto:albertatorchrun@gmail.com)

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Justin about to hit a "good one" at the 2017 SOA Summer Games