Be Cool.

TAKE THE PLUNGE.

2027 LAW ENFORCEMENT TORCH RUN POLAR PLUNGE FOR SPECIAL OLYMPICS ILLINOIS



FUNDRAISING *Guide*

ABOUT US

Special Olympics Illinois builds a more inclusive world alongside people with intellectual disabilities. We believe that when athletes have the support to use their abilities, everyone thrives. Through year-round sports, health, and leadership programs, we create opportunities for growth, personal development, and connection.

Serving more than 55,000 athletes, Unified partners, coaches, and volunteers, we offer training and competition in 19 sports, working with individuals to reach their potential while strengthening communities.

32.6K
PARTICIPANTS

195+
COMPETITIONS

1,020+
HEALTH SCREENINGS

WHAT IT IS

The Polar Plunge is one the largest and most iconic Law Enforcement Torch Run/Special Olympics Illinois fundraisers. Each winter, thousands of participants across the state brave icy waters to support Special Olympics Illinois athletes. Each of the 26 Plunges across the state offer a festive atmosphere with costumes, team spirit and community celebration.

HOW IT WORKS

Supporters can donate by registering to take the plunge or by supporting a plunger's fundraising efforts. Each dollar raised helps create opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities.

WHY IT MATTERS

As one of Illinois' most anticipated winter events, the Polar Plunge delivers a powerful experience of courage, community, and inclusion.

WHAT IS YOUR IMPACT?

$100 – Sends one athlete to State Basketball Tournament

$250 – Sends one athlete to State Golf Tournament

$500 – Sends one athlete to Winter Games

$1,000 – Sends one team to a basketball competition

$5,000 – Sends one class to Athlete Leadership University

FUNDRAISING BEST PRACTICES



SHARE YOUR STORY

We encourage you to personalize your fundraising page and tell your WHY. Show others what Special Olympics Illinois means to you by sharing pictures, stories and experiences.

GET SOCIAL

Utilize our social media custom images and template captions for Instagram, Facebook, X, LinkedIn & other social networks in order to maximize your fundraising reach. Be sure to include your fundraising page link in all posts.

EMAIL

On average, 1 in 5 fundraising emails will result in a donation. The more emails you send, the better your odds are for receiving a donation. Use one of our pre-written templates. For the best results, personalize them and make it your own.

MATCHING GIFTS

Many companies will match charitable donations made by their employees if they complete a simple matching gift form. This easy step can double or even triple the impact of a gift! Use our online search tool to see if an employer will **match a donation**. Promote this to your donors and also see if your personal gift is eligible.

LEAD THE WAY

Kick off your fundraising with a personal donation to your fundraising page to show your commitment to the cause as well.

THANK YOUR DONORS

Be sure to thank every donor who supported your efforts! Thank Yous can be delivered in a variety of different ways; hand-written notes, phone calls or even something as simple as a text.

FUNDRAISER IDEA!

Are you looking for a way to boost your fundraising total for this year? Host a Plunge Icon Sale to not only increase your fundraising total but to also spread awareness about Plunge. Plunge icons are themed paper cutouts supporters buy for a donation, write their name on, and display to show support for Special Olympics Illinois. To use them, **print the icons** from your toolkit, set a suggested donation (like $1, $5, or $10), and sell them in high-traffic areas like local businesses, restaurants or offices. Track donations, build a “Wall of Support,” and thank participants with shoutouts or small tokens to boost community spirit and fundraising success.

HOW TO RAISE $100 IN 5 DAYS

DAY	THE ASK	TOTAL PER DAY	GRAND TOTAL
1	Personal donation $10	$10	$10
2	Ask 4 friends for a $5 donation	$20	$30
3	Call 3 family members and ask for a $10 donation	$30	$60
4	Post on social media and ask your followers to help you raise $20 in one day	$20	$80
5	Ask 4 people at your favorite establishments for a donation of $5	$20	$100

HOW TO RAISE $500 IN 10 DAYS

DAY	THE ASK	TOTAL PER DAY	GRAND TOTAL
1	Personal donation $25	$25	$25
2	Ask 3 family members for a $25	$75	$100
3	Ask 4 friends to donate $20	$80	$180
4	Ask 5 co-workers to give $10	$50	$230
5	Ask 3 neighbors to donate $10	$30	$260
6	Ask 4 people from a community group for $15	$60	$320
7	Ask your place of employment for a donation of $50 or match your total you raise	$50	$370
8	Ask your closest friend for a $25 donation	$25	$395
9	Ask 2 businesses you frequent for $15	$30	$425
10	Post on social media and ask your followers to help	$75	$500

SAMPLE EMAIL

Dear [NAME],

Hello,

I hope you are doing well. I'm getting ready to **BE COOL** and **TAKE THE PLUNGE** in support of Special Olympics Illinois!

While jumping into icy water may only last a few seconds, the impact of the funds raised lasts all year. Special Olympics Illinois provides sports training, competition, health programs, leadership opportunities and inclusive experiences for more than 60,000 participants throughout the state.

I've set a fundraising goal of {x}, and need your help to reach it. A donation of any amount can make a meaningful difference for athletes and their families. Just head to [personal fundraising link] to support my plunge and Special Olympics Illinois.

Thank you for supporting this incredible movement and the amazing athletes. If you want to take the plunge with me, sign up at **plungeillinois.com.**

Thanks again!

[YOUR NAME]



SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLKIT

SOCIAL MEDIA CAPTIONS

Post #1

I've pledged to #PlungeIllinois this year, and I need your help! Every year, Special Olympics Illinois hosts hundreds of events for people with intellectual disabilities, and FYI - each donation of $150 sends one athlete to a competition. Help me make a difference by donating today!
[INSERT PERSONAL FUNDRAISING LINK]

Post #2

I'm taking on #PlungeIllinois to support the thousands of athletes that compete with Special Olympics Illinois. This organization changes lives by unleashing the human spirit through the transformative power and joy of sport, every day. Join in supporting the mission. Donate here: **[INSERT PERSONAL FUNDRAISING LINK].**

Post #3

I have chosen to #PlungeIllinois this year in support of the life-changing mission of Special Olympics Illinois. When you donate, you help thousands of athletes in Illinois realize their full potential in sports and in life. So BE COOL and join me in helping to make the world a more inclusive place! Donate: **[INSERT PERSONAL FUNDRAISING LINK]**

SOCIAL MEDIA IMAGES







CLICK HERE to download the full social media toolkit

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#plungeillinois

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