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**CAPE GIRARDEAU POLICE OFFICERS TO PARTICIPATE IN
MISSOURI LAW ENFORCEMENT TORCH RUN BENEFITTING SPECIAL OLYMPICS;
FINISH LINE AT BANTERRA CENTRE**

Cape Girardeau, MO – Cape Girardeau Police Officers will participate in the Missouri Law Enforcement Torch Run on May 18th, with the local route starting at Plants Plus at 910 South Kingshighway and finishing at Banterra Centre at 1650 North Kingshighway. The event begins at 8 a.m. and runners are expected to arrive at the Missouri Running Company finish line located at Banterra Centre between 8:30 a.m.- 9:00 a.m. Special activities are planned in the Banterra Centre parking lot including a Wing Eating Contest with selected police officers and Special Olympic supporters is provided by Wings Etc., free beverages provided by Banterra Bank and more. The Law Enforcement Torch Run generates awareness and funds for Special Olympics, with participants raising money throughout the year for the event, in conjunction with corporate sponsors and t-shirt sales. Special Olympics is law enforcements' charity of choice.

"This is an event that we look forward to every year," said Joey Hann, Region 9 Torch Run Coordinator and Patrol Sergeant at the Cape Girardeau Police Department. "If you ever see the faces of a Special Olympics athletes - their joy at participating and the determination that they show - you'll understand how honored we are to run down Kingshighway carrying a torch for their heroism and to raise money for this important charity."

The Missouri Police Chiefs Association is the founding law enforcement organization for the Missouri Torch Run for Special Olympics. What began in 1986 as a 30-mile run is now a four-day relay covering more than 950 miles with 1,000 runners. It originates in more than 40 locations and culminates at the site of the State Summer Games. The Law Enforcement Torch Run began more than 30 years ago in Kansas as a vision of Chief Richard LaMunyon, who wanted to give his officers an opportunity to participate in something positive. Today, the LETR is held in 50 states and 48 countries around the world. The event raises \$42.6 million annually and recruits more than 15,000 law enforcement officers from all over the world.

"I have always been so proud of Cape Girardeau and the Southeast Missouri community in their support of our organization," said Penny Williams, Development Director of Special Olympics Missouri. "Our law enforcement is to be applauded for their efforts in keeping our community safe on a daily basis; to go above and beyond to raise money and awareness for Special Olympics through the Law Enforcement Torch Run is simply exceptional."

Special Olympics encourages all businesses along the Kingshighway route to support the law enforcement runners by putting a message on their signs, allowing staff to stand outside to cheer them on, or simply handing them water along the route. Public is encouraged to join the runners at the finish line at Banterra Centre and to celebrate in the activities.

Banterra Bank in Cape Girardeau is honored to host the end of the relay and is a proud supporter of Special Olympics Missouri. Banterra celebrated their new location in Cape Girardeau in 2013 by hosting a basketball shoot-out for Special Olympics in their parking lot, where donations were accepted to compete with Special Olympic athletes. Banterra team members participate in the Polar Plunge annually, an event that had 175 participants plunging into winter waters to raise more than \$45,000 for the Southeast Area Special Olympics. Banterra Bank in Cape Girardeau is one of 35 Banterra locations in Missouri, Illinois, Indiana and Kentucky. Banterra Bank began as a single bank in Ridgway, Illinois in July of 1975 and today has more than \$1.4 billion in assets.

Special Olympics Missouri is a year-round program of sports training and athletic competition for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. 15,250 athletes participate in 21 Olympic-type sports throughout the state. Special Olympics provides people with developmental disabilities continuing opportunities to develop fitness, demonstrate courage and experience joy as they participate in the sharing of gifts and friendship with other athletes, their families and the community. For more information about the Missouri Law Enforcement Torch Run, as well as additional Special Olympics information, go to www.somo.org.

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