



**Special
Olympics**
New Mexico



LETR Celebrates Nomination of NM Officer Ana Ortiz for International Award

In the midst of the challenges caused by COVID-19, the New Mexico Law Enforcement Torch Run would like to celebrate the nomination of Santa Ana Pueblo Police Department Officer Ana Ortiz, for LETR International's annual John Carion Unsung Hero Award—given to officers who demonstrated high levels of spirit, dedication and enthusiasm for raising awareness and funds for Special Olympics in an effective and unheralded fashion.

On December 1, 2020, Officer Ortiz joined an elite nominating class of passionate and dedicated LETR officers, who over decades have put the mission of Special Olympics and the objectives of our LETR community policing program at the forefront of their public safety careers. While we joined Ana in celebrating the induction of three of her fellow LETR officers from across the globe, here in New Mexico we want to bring to light what made Ana our pick for this prestigious award.

In the words of Lt. Josh Laino of the Farmington Police Department, "Officer Ortiz exemplifies the spirit of the John Carion 'Unsung Hero' Award. She is without question the most dedicated and positive LETR representative I have ever come into contact with during my twenty-three years in law enforcement. Her spirit and love for our athletes, and dedication to the LETR mission is unprecedented, and her enthusiasm is unparalleled. She embodies everything one could hope for in a Torch Runner and raises the bar to new heights, all the while not seeking a single ounce of attention, recognition or accolade."

As a testament to her willingness to go above and beyond for our Special Olympics athletes, one story we all share about Ana says it all: In 2019, Officer Ortiz had committed to travel to Farmington to partake in our SONM Four Corners Invitational Games (state golf, aquatics and softball) as a Games Volunteer as well as representing LETR.

"While at the aquatics venue, one athlete was struggling to get into the pool for fear that he would drown, and although a large crowd had gathered to cheer on and support our athlete; it was evident that no coaxing would be sufficient enough to help overcome his fears," said Lt. Laino. "As this went on for some time, the crowd began to dwindle in numbers. While others became frustrated, Officer Ortiz never gave up, never wavered in support. Fully clothed and with no reservation, she hopped right into the pool and continued to offer words of encouragement. She further pledged that she would stay with him until he overcame his fear. And true to her word, she would do just that even though this undertaking went on for more than an hour." LETR State Director and Rio Rancho Police Department Officer Ben Sanchez echoed Lt. Laino's praise of Officer Ana and offered his own perspective serving with Ana on our LETR Executive Committee, which oversees guidelines and activities geared to bringing our Torch Run program to more communities across New Mexico.

"What is unique about Ana is that she would not only host and support LETR events for her agency, but also for as long as I can remember, she drives to big cities and small towns alike, all over this vast state to attend LETR events," said Officer Sanchez. "Sometimes completing a close to 600 mile round trip just to go smile and shake hands with parents, coaches and athletes she has never met. She has never been asked to do this, and she doesn't get praise, she is just an unsung hero for the cause."

On behalf of our entire Law Enforcement Torch Run Executive Committee, we ask that you join us in congratulating, celebrating and honoring Officer Ana Ortiz on her nomination for the 2020 LETR International John Carion Unsung Hero Award. She has helped put New Mexico on the map as a state devoted to building inclusive communities for all children and adults with intellectual disabilities.