



Sharing Ohio's Best Program

Recognizing Outstanding Community Policing



Agency of the Month

Hilliard Police Department

February 2020

The Hilliard Division of Police prides itself on outstanding community policing projects that have proven success. Through strong community relationships, they have joined their growing community together with a better understanding of how they can work together to make a better community.

Polar Plunge for Special Olympics Ohio. . . .

Each winter several members of the Hilliard Division of Police are “freezin’ for a reason” in support of the Special Olympics of Ohio.

Six members of HPD participated in the 2019 Columbus Polar Plunge and raised \$3,014 toward the Hilliard Special Olympics’ total of \$14,389. The Columbus Polar Plunge raised more than \$100,000 for Special Olympics.

Participating officers were Lt. Ron Clark, Officer Dustin Gigandet, Officer Hunter Schweickart, Detective Kristen Winter, Officer Vanessa Spears and Officer Brandon Long, who has been active as a Special Olympics volunteer and coach for six years.



Seeing his fellow officers join the cause this year is “heartwarming,” Long said. “The officers have so much to give, and to see them share with our amazing athletes is very exciting,” he said. “Experiences like that allow barriers to be broken, and everyone wins. It embodies what inclusion is all about.”

Hilliard police also participates in the annual Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics each June and — with the Norwich Township Fire Department — hosts a softball game between Special Olympics athletes and first responders every summer.

Interacting with athletes out of uniform creates “a sense of trust and comfort with us that carries over into uniform,” said Long, a Hilliard Davidson High School graduate who joined HPD in 2011. “Athletes are able to see us in a different light and realize the uniform isn’t as scary as it may initially seem,” he said.

The athletes aren’t the only ones winning. Long said the relationships have allowed him to grow personally and professionally.

“It has made me a better person,” he said, “and I strive to share the importance of Special Olympics with as many people as I can.”



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Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics. . . .

The Flame of Hope made its way through Old Hilliard in June 2019 as members of the Hilliard Division of Police joined athletes for the 33rd Annual Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics.

The Hilliard leg of the race is among several that take place throughout the state. Officers join together to bike, run, and walk across Ohio, carrying the torch into Columbus to ignite the ceremonial cauldron.

The Torch Run involves more than 2,000 police officers from 150 communities, as the torch is escorted down six main arteries throughout the state.

In Hilliard, runners started on Cemetery Road and made their way down Norwich and Main streets before finishing at First Responders Park, where representatives from Safelite AutoGlass were on hand to provide lunch. One by one, officers took turns running with the torch, raising awareness and money along the way while onlookers cheered them on.



The Hilliard Division of Police team raised nearly \$2,000, ranking as the fourth in the state. Officer Brandon Long and Hilliard Citizens Police Academy Alumni member Kelly Lamb each raised more than \$500 and were among the top 10 fundraisers in the state. The torch will continue on and finish its journey in Columbus on Friday, June 28, to kick off the opening ceremonies for the 2019 Special Olympics Summer Games.

Media coverage: <https://www.thisweeknews.com/news/20190702/hilliard-runners-carry-torch-for-special-olympics>

Autism Awareness Open House. . . .

A sensory-friendly fun day was held once again by the Hilliard Division of Police.

The agency's Fourth Annual Autism Awareness Open House was held in April 2019 at the Safety Services Building, 5171 Northwest Parkway.

This event, which takes place days after World Autism Awareness Day on April 2, provided participants the opportunity to socialize with First Responders in a calm and reassuring environment.



Activities included the chance to see police cars, Norwich Township fire trucks, and police and fire gear up close. Other local agencies were hand to offer services for residents with autism.

Families, children, and adults on the autism spectrum, as well as their caretakers attended. The event was also open to residents both within and outside the City of Hilliard.

The event allows for positive relationship building between First Responders and those on the autism spectrum, said Chief Robert Fisher. "This is an opportunity for us to break down barriers with an important sector of the population we serve," said Fisher.



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Media coverage:

<https://abc6onyourside.com/news/local/hilliard-police-host-4th-annual-autism-awareness-open-house>

<https://www.thisweeknews.com/news/20180417/hilliard-officers-break-down-barriers-with-autism-awareness-event>

Law Enforcement LowDown. . . .

Members of the community with Down syndrome were invited to trick-or-treat with Hilliard police in October 2019 as part of the agency's first Law Enforcement LowDOWN event.

The Law Enforcement LowDOWN is a coordinated effort between the Hilliard Division of Police and the Down Syndrome Association of Central Ohio (DSACO) and is sponsored by Columbia Gas of Ohio.

Attendees had the opportunity to learn basic safety skills and become familiar with local police officers. Activities included a tour of the police station, a question and answer session with officers, a visit from the police mascot "Leo the Lion," an opportunity to see a police cruiser, and a visit from a police K9.



Families also learned about services and resources available to residents that may help in an emergency. The program concluded with a trick-or-treating session with police officers and firefighters.

"We're thrilled to bring this program to Hilliard for the first time," said Chief of Police Robert Fisher. "This is an opportunity for a beneficial day of learning and fun with an important sector of the population we serve."

"There is much to be gained from the Down syndrome and broader developmental disability community engaging with their local law enforcement in a controlled setting," said Kari Jones, DSACO president and CEO. "Both parties can gain a deeper understanding of one another and become more equipped with safety strategies."

Media coverage:

<https://www.thisweeknews.com/news/20191015/hilliard-lowdown-helps-remove-fear-of-police-firefighters>

Annual Softball Game with Special Olympics. . . .

The annual softball game with Hilliard Special Olympics and Norwich Twp. Fire is always a blast each summer.

Our Citizens Police Academy provides lunch for everyone. In this game, everyone wins! 🍷

