



DEOMI

Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute
CENTER OF EXCELLENCE



DEOMI Students Add Huge Impact During Statewide Race for Inclusion

Story by DEOMI Public Affairs

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PATRICK SPACE FORCE BASE, Fla.— Approximately 22 students in the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute’s (DEOMI) Equal Opportunity Advisor Course (EOAC), Class 23-03, volunteered as supporters and participated in the 2023 Race for Inclusion, Special Olympics Florida’s challenge to build a world of inclusion and acceptance, Oct. 21, 2023, in Kissimmee, Florida.



Additionally, through the life-changing generosity of over 40 donors, the students helped raise \$1,353.00. This exceeded the group’s monetary goal by 35%, and their significant contributions to this cause helps support athletes across Florida, build a culture of inclusion, and show children and adults with intellectual disabilities that everyone is valued, and that everyone has unlimited potential.

As outlined in the 2023 Race for Inclusion website, “It’s not a campaign; it’s a revolution...a battle against the isolation and injustices faced by people with intellectual disabilities. It’s a call for respect and understanding. It’s a celebration that culminates with a series of race events across Florida.”

The goal of the statewide Race for Inclusion program is to help change perceptions of people with intellectual disabilities. They race to show that people with intellectual disabilities have unlimited potential...that they can be world-class athletes, dedicated students, valuable employees, and community leaders. They race to create a society that demands respect and acceptance for everyone. Special Olympics is known worldwide for its work supporting the physical, mental, and social well-being of people with intellectual disabilities.

“We chose this particular event because it stands up for diversity, equity, and inclusion for all and inspires change and hope,” shared EOAC 23-03 Event Team Captain, United States Marine Corps. Staff Sgt. Andrew C. Gilbert. “Through the power of sports, people with intellectual disabilities discover new strengths and abilities, skills and success. The athletes find joy, confidence, and fulfillment — on the playing field and in life. They also inspire people in their communities and elsewhere to open their hearts to a wider world of human talents and potential. Ultimately, Special Olympics transforms lives through the joy of sport, every day, everywhere.”

Justin Brothers, a student in EOAC 23-03 Group 4, came out to support as a runner and had the opportunity to run side-by-side with an athlete throughout the race.

“Running with this young man was inspirational to say the least, said Brothers.



Brothers shared that he felt a sense of community with Special Olympics Florida, felt immediately welcomed and a sense of gratitude. and like he had a new lease on life.

“Observing the athletes enjoying life and appreciating their time at the race showed things from a different perspective, and I felt like I had a new lease on life,” added Brothers.

“I have been volunteering with Special Olympics for a few years now, and it fills me with a sense of purpose and joy. For this class to support this effort and go out and meet these incredible people and this wonderful community was very fulfilling,” stated Gilbert.

A resonating DEOMI mantra is “make a difference each and every day” and EOAC Class 23-03’s participation of this impactful cause reinforces it 100%.

“Not only did this support a great cause in the immediate, but long term, I hope that some of the volunteers and people who came out to run have walked away inspired to do more and share that same sense of welcome and community that Mr. Brothers felt,” shared Gilbert. “Every state has a Special Olympics program, so I hope that my classmates remember this and get involved to the extent they can wherever they go.”

The DEOMI team advances an agile and inclusive force that values and develops all individuals and thrives on their contributions. Since its inception in 1971, then known as the Defense Race Relations Institute, DEOMI has developed and delivered innovative education, training, research, and collaborative solutions to more than 53,000 DEOMI military and civilian graduates.

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