

LEON'S HEROES

OBSTACLE COURSE RACE ATHLETE GUIDE

SEPTEMBER 14TH, 2025



VIEW THE 2024 RACE PBS FEATURE at
<https://www.pbs.org/video/leons-heroes-obstacle-course-xoq8lz>

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WELCOME

A MESSAGE FROM OUR RACE FOUNDER LEON WOLEK

I would like to humbly welcome you to the 2025 Leon's Obstacle Race.

Inspired by my father's words—*"You have a moral obligation, in the journey of your life, to do what you can, when you can."*—this event was created as a tribute to his legacy. Leon's Obstacle Race, "America's Race" Triathlon, and Leon's Heroes are more than competitions; they are opportunities for us to honor those who have sacrificed for our freedom and to stand together in support of our military and first responders.

Driven by the spirit of service and compassion, we strive to ensure that no hero or individual is forgotten. As you join us on this extraordinary journey, you are not only challenging yourself but also paying tribute to those who have served. Together, we celebrate the resilience and unity that define our nation, turning every stride into a powerful act of remembrance and gratitude.

Thank you and good luck on race day,

Leon Wolek

Founder, Leon's Obstacle Course Race



LEON'S HEROES OBSTACLE COURSE RACE

9/14

5K | 10K | CANINE

WEST BEACH

INDIANA DUNES NATIONAL PARK



FROM THE SHORES OF LAKE MICHIGAN TO THE FINISH LINE

9/11

INDIANA DUNES STATE PARK
VIP ROOFTOP RECEPTION

VOLUNTEER OR REGISTER TO RACE LEONSTRIATHLON.COM



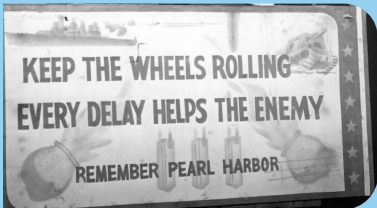
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SHORELINE

CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE THROUGHOUT HISTORY AND TODAY

The unmatched spirit of Lake Michigan’s southern shoreline is a place whose significance simply can’t be duplicated. Here, on these storied shores, steel mills stand as pillars of American strength, forging the backbone of our Navy vessels and supporting those who defend our freedom. Just steps away, local refineries fuel the heart of the Midwest, powering our communities and keeping America moving forward.



Bettmann Archive/Getty Images



Calumet Regional Archives,
Indiana University Northwest

During World War II, the U.S. Steel factory along the shores of Lake Michigan sprang to life, operating around the clock, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to meet the urgent demands of wartime production. The region buzzed with energy as new factories rose alongside the steel mills, fueling America’s arsenal.

As many men answered the call to serve overseas, the women of Northern Indiana and across the nation stepped forward with unwavering determination. They filled the factory floors, keeping the furnaces blazing and the assembly lines moving, ensuring a steady supply of steel and other vital materials for the war effort. Their resilience and dedication became a powerful symbol of the home front’s strength, forever shaping the legacy of Lake Michigan’s shoreline.



We are humbled and honored to call this location home, and we invite you to recognize the extraordinary importance of this shoreline, where industry, community, and patriotism come together in a way that can only be found here.

LEON'S HEROES


42 YEARS OF AMERICA'S RACE GROUNDED IN TRADITION AND GRATITUDE



For more than four decades, Leon's Heroes and their legendary triathlon race have stood as a living tribute to the spirit of service, sacrifice, and community that defines America. Founded in 1983 by Leon Wolek, an avid triathlete and proud son of Northwest Indiana, Leon's Triathlon quickly became much more than a race—it became **"America's Race."** Each year, athletes of all backgrounds, from first-timers to elite paratriathletes and military veterans, gather at the most patriotic race site in the country to honor our nation's heroes. With opening ceremonies featuring a massive American flag, military and first responder representation, and stirring tributes to those who serve, Leon's events are a powerful reminder that we are all part of something bigger than ourselves

Supported by groups across Northwest Indiana and Chicago communities, including veterans' groups, union labor, and local businesses, Leon's events are more than just races—they are calls to action, opportunities to educate the next generation, and heartfelt celebrations of courage and resilience. Just like the original triathlon, the obstacle course race is a carefully designed tribute to our nation's military and first responders.

At Leon's, we don't just race—we remember, we honor, and we unite as one community under the flag



United States of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 118th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Washington, D.C. Tuesday, May 28, 2024

House of Representatives

MRVAN RECOGNIZES LEON'S HEROES

Mr. Speaker: It is with sincere admiration that I take this time to recognize one of Northwest Indiana's finest organizations, Leon's Heroes, as it will once again host the annual Leon's Triathlon, widely known as "America's Race." This outstanding display of patriotism and athleticism honors our veterans and active service members, with a special focus on those who have sustained injuries during their time in service. This year's event will be held at Wolf Lake in Hammond, Indiana, and will include static displays, festivities, and opening ceremonies leading up to the start of the race on Sunday, June 2, 2024.

Founded in 1983 by Leon Wolek, an avid triathlete and native of Hobart, Indiana, Leon's Triathlon has drawn participants from across the country and has been a source of immense pride for the Northwest Indiana community. Having grown up admiring his father who served in the military, and spending time with and listening to the stories of other veterans at American Legion Post 454 in New Chicago, Indiana, Leon was compelled to ensure that the many brave individuals who have defended our nation throughout its history received the recognition they deserve. With this idea in mind, Leon's Triathlon emerged.

Originally, the race took place in Leon's hometown of Hobart at the Inak Wagon League before its popularity and corresponding growth required its relocation. The city of Hammond, Indiana, was inspired by the organization's unwavering commitment to those who serve and have served our country and proudly welcomed the special event to the city. Fittingly, a portion of the race now runs along the Gold Star Memorial Highway, a designation which Leon's Heroes was instrumental in securing, and is dedicated to Indiana families who have lost loved ones in service. Leon's Triathlon has seen immense growth in participation since its inception, and many of the participants are veterans and active military members. As participation has grown so too has the number of events, which now includes additional events throughout the year. Since 2021, Leon's Heroes has also hosted an annual obstacle course event which takes place every September at Indiana Dunes National Park. This event recalls the attacks of September 11, 2001, while honoring our veterans and the many first responders who came to aid our fellow citizens on that tragic day.

Mr. Speaker, throughout its history, Leon's Heroes has remained steadfast in its commitment to honoring the legacy of our military members, past and present. I ask you and my other distinguished colleagues to join me in commending the organization for its outstanding dedication to the community, to our veterans, to our active service members, and to our first responders. Leon Wolek and the many devoted volunteers involved with this extraordinary organization are truly worthy of our highest praise.

House of Representatives Recognizes Leon's Heros in 2024

BUILT BY HEROES, FOR HEROES

THE VETERANS AND PARTNERSHIPS WHO BUILD EACH RACE

Every race at Leon’s is a true celebration of partnership and community spirit. What sets us apart is the way our event unites municipal organizations, unions, businesses, and individuals—all working together to build the very foundation of race day. Throughout the year, and especially as the big day approaches, these dedicated partners help us construct challenging obstacles, safeguard our American flags in custom-crafted crates, forge our medals, and show up in force to support our mission. We are absolutely honored to have an amazing community of iconic brands that keep each race sailing.

As race week begins, Camp Leon comes alive—anchored by a team of veterans and powered by countless volunteer groups who set the stage for the unforgettable moments ahead. Every inch of the race course is built by heroes, for heroes. Each flag, every photo of remembrance, and all obstacles are placed with deep respect and care, honoring the sacrifices of those we serve.



Race day itself is a moving tribute. We’ve had the privilege of opening with the Chicago Police Department singing the National Anthem, performances by local music groups, and even awe-inspiring visits from a UH-60M Blackhawk helicopter courtesy of the Indiana National Guard. At Leon’s, every detail is a testament to unity, service, and the enduring spirit of our community.

CORPORATE GROUPS

LOGISTICS AND CONSIDERATIONS



In 2024, we were honored to have a significant presence from the Ozinga team join us for the obstacle races, standing alongside us to recognize the men and women who selflessly serve and protect our communities.

How do we go about organizing a start wave for our group/ company?

Please contact: leonstriathlon@aol.com or call (219) 263-8345 to arrange your group’s start wave. Teams should arrive 30 minutes before the start time.

Where are we able to park for the event?

Parking at Indiana Dunes National Park is limited so we strongly encourage groups and companies to consider carpooling and group transportation to limit the impact on the national park’s resources. The parking lot at 376 North County Line Road, Gary, IN 46403 is immediately at the starting line.

How can we further foster a team atmosphere?

We are proud to have welcomed organizations that support Leon’s Obstacle Race in so many creative and meaningful ways—from custom team t-shirts and pre-race beach cleanups to contributing equipment and helping design obstacles. We’re always eager to collaborate and explore how we can bring your group’s collective vision to life at this iconic event. Please bring questions to us when calling/ emailing to arrange a start wave.

Are there other ways to support Leon’s Heros?

If you’d like to support Leon’s Heroes through a donation, we invite you to [\[click here to visit our donation page\]](#). Every contribution goes directly to supporting our heroes and helping us bring this special event to life.

PRE-RACE EVENTS

VIP PRE-RACE RECEPTION

**LEON'S
HEROES**

VIP

2025 PRE-RACE RECEPTION

THURSDAY, SEPT 11

Experience an unbelievable rooftop panoramic view of the Lake Michigan shoreline, enjoy appetizers and refreshments and meet world-class military athletes. Also honoring K-9 HEROES military, law-enforcement and service dogs.

6:00 PM - 9:00 PM


Indiana Dunes State Park Pavilion
1600 N 25 E, Chesterton, IN 46304

\$75 ticket includes 2 drinks,
3x5 American flag, and event shirt.
Park entrance fee will apply.

Honor Military Veterans, Law Enforcement
and First Responders as we commemorate
the 24th Anniversary of 9/11.

DIGNITY ★ HONOR ★ RESPECT ★ TRUST

TICKET #



This ticket must be presented for entry.
Proceeds will benefit Leons Heroes Inc. 501(c)(3).
www.leonstriathlon.com

Join us for an exclusive evening unlike any other, set against the breathtaking backdrop of Lake Michigan from the rooftop of the historic Indiana Dunes State Park Pavilion. This limited-capacity VIP Pre-Race Reception is your chance to take in stunning panoramic views while enjoying delicious appetizers, refreshing drinks, and meaningful conversations.

Mingle with world-class military athletes and hear inspiring stories of resilience and service. This special evening also pays tribute to our K-9 Heroes — the loyal military, law enforcement, and service dogs who have stood bravely alongside their handlers.

In commemoration of the 24th anniversary of 9/11, we honor our nation's military veterans, law enforcement officers, and first responders with heartfelt gratitude and reverence.

Tickets: \$75

Each ticket includes:

- Two complimentary drinks
- Hors d'oeuvres and refreshments
- A commemorative 3x5 American flag
- An official event shirt

Space is extremely limited — reserve your place at this unforgettable gathering and help us honor the heroes who serve and protect our nation.

Contact us at leonstriathlon@aol.com or (219) 263-8345 for tickets

RACE DAY

EVENT SCHEDULE

Sun., Sept 14th

Please note that the finalized event schedule will be shared as we get closer to the event date.

As we continue to collect registrations and determine wave start times, we will coordinate with you and your group to accommodate your schedule for the event day.

Event times are subject to change. All participants will receive timely updates via email and through our social media channels. Be sure to stay connected for the latest information!

RACE DAY

LOGISTICS

PARKING LOT: WEST BEACH INDIANA DUNES

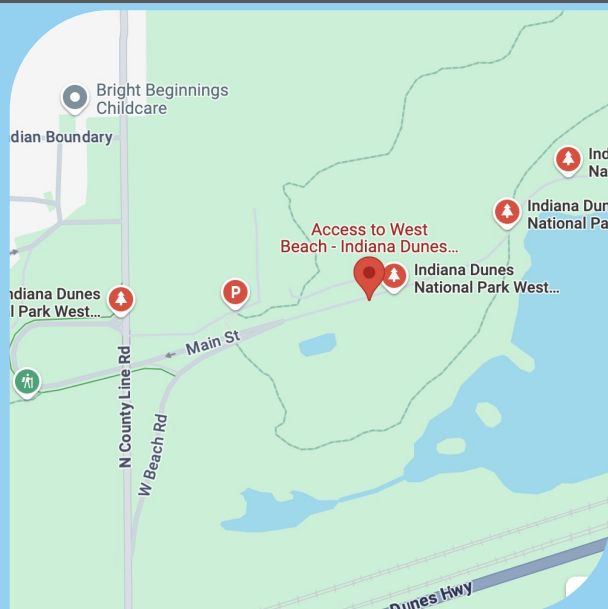
**376 North County Line Road
Gary, IN 46403**

655 TOTAL SPACES

OPEN 6:00 am to 9:00 pm

Considerations:

- Lot can become busy during peak Summer Season, please anticipate longer entrance times between 8am and 11am on the race date.
- Current US military and dependents, Gold Star Families, and US military veterans are welcome to use their Military Annual or Military Lifetime park pass for park entry. A program is being worked out to accommodate patriotic civilians with details to be announced once available.
- Restrooms and potable water are located at the parking lot. Showers and lockers are located at the bath house.



RACE DAY

HONORED GUESTS



MARINES

This year, we invite you to share in the honor of welcoming active U.S. Marines, offering us a special opportunity to express our gratitude for their service in person.

As we reflect on this legacy, we are filled not only with admiration, but also with humble gratitude for the continued support of the U.S. Marines—especially their presence at Leon’s Obstacle Race. Year after year, these remarkable men and women stand with us, bringing depth and meaning to the event by sharing in our mission to honor courage, perseverance, and sacrifice. **Their participation is more than ceremonial—it is a reminder of what we race for, and why we gather.**

We are truly thankful for the Marines who choose to be part of this journey with us. Their involvement transforms the course into hallowed ground, reminding each runner and spectator of the legacy we celebrate and the values we uphold.

"Someone needed help. It didn't matter who. I didn't even have a plan. But I have all this training as a Marine, and all I could think was, 'My city is in need.'"

- Sgt. Jason Thomas on 9/11/2001

"...From that moment on, when the flag went up, we knew we were. It didn't get any easier, but we knew we were going to win. We were reminded of what we were there for."

- Capt. Gerald Russell on the Battle of Iwo Jima

RACE DAY

HONORED GUESTS

With Gratitude to the United States

Navy: Honoring a Legacy of Service and Support



At Leon's Triathlon and Obstacle Race, we proudly extend our heartfelt gratitude to the **United States Navy** for their ongoing support of our events. Their presence year after year adds profound meaning to the race, reminding us of the enduring values of service, courage, and commitment.

For our founder, Leon Wolek, this connection is deeply personal. His father was a **proud U.S. Navy veteran of World War II**, having served his country with honor. His example of dedication and resilience has been a guiding force behind the mission of this event. Honoring the Navy's legacy isn't just symbolic—it's woven into the very heart of Leon's Triathlon.

The U.S. Navy has been an essential force in safeguarding our nation's freedoms for nearly two and a half centuries. From the earliest days of the American Revolution, through world wars, and into modern-day missions around the world, the Navy has stood watch over our seas and shores—protecting commerce, defending allies, and ensuring peace through strength. Today, the Navy continues to stand as a symbol of resilience, innovation, and courage. Their sailors representing not just military might, but also the highest standards of honor, commitment, and service.

At Leon's Obstacle Race, we are truly grateful for the Navy's continued support of our race and our mission. Their involvement strengthens the spirit of our event and reminds us all the sacrifices made every day by the men and women in uniform. Whether they're assisting behind the scenes or standing proudly alongside racers and spectators, the presence of Navy personnel is always inspiring.

To the sailors past and present: we thank you. Your courage at sea has shaped our history, and your ongoing support uplifts our community.

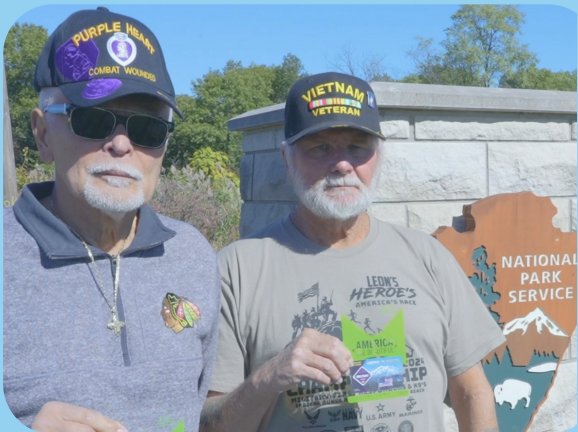
Fair winds and following seas.

RACE DAY

CARING FOR OUR NATIONAL TREASURES

Keeping our parks clean is a simple act that preserves nature’s beauty for everyone to enjoy—today and for generations to come.

We are immensely thankful for the National Park staff and all the work they do to maintain these national treasures.



Veterans pictured with their Military Lifetime Pass

We welcome you to join in our show of gratitude by helping leave the park cleaner than when we found it. Home Depot buckets and heavy-duty trash bags will be provided, making it easy for anyone to make a positive impact.

To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; to know that even one life has breathed easier because you have lived – that is to have succeeded.’ Ralph Waldo Emerson



RACE DAY

EVENT RULES

ALL RACERS: 5K, 10K, CANINE

- Respect the natural environment at all times. Do not disturb wildlife, pick plants, or stray from marked trails.
- Dispose of all trash in designated bins. Leave no trace.
- Follow the marked course at all times. Cutting the course is not permitted.
- Wait your turn at obstacles if there is a backup. Do not skip ahead of others.
- Treat fellow participants, volunteers, and staff with respect at all times.

CANINE RACE

What kinds of considerations are given to canine racers?

The canine start waves will be the first event of the day, with exact start times communicated via email. We are mindful of the summer heat and will prioritize these waves to ensure the sand remains comfortable for your dogs' paws. Please keep your canine's well-being in mind on race day and make choices that put your furry companion's health and safety first.

What kind of dogs can participate?

As this is an event for all ages, we are happy to welcome friendly, well-socialized dogs. For everyone's safety and enjoyment, we request that each adult only race with one dog and that dogs are leashed at all times.

Participating dogs must be at least one year old and up to date on all required vaccinations. Dogs should be in good health, free from illness or age-related limitations, and must not have any history or signs of aggression.

RACE DAY

CANINE RACE CONSIDERATIONS

WAVES FOR POLICE DOGS

We recognize that Police Dogs and K-9 Units have unique requirements regarding obstacle types, social interactions, and safety considerations during events. To ensure these needs are fully addressed, we offer a dedicated K-9 Unit course. Our team will collaborate closely with your department to tailor the course layout, obstacles, and participation guidelines according to your program’s specific standards and operational objectives.

CANINE RACING GEAR

Canine races are gaining popularity, and ensuring your dog’s safety with the right equipment is essential. We encourage all participants to carefully research and select gear designed specifically for canine racing.

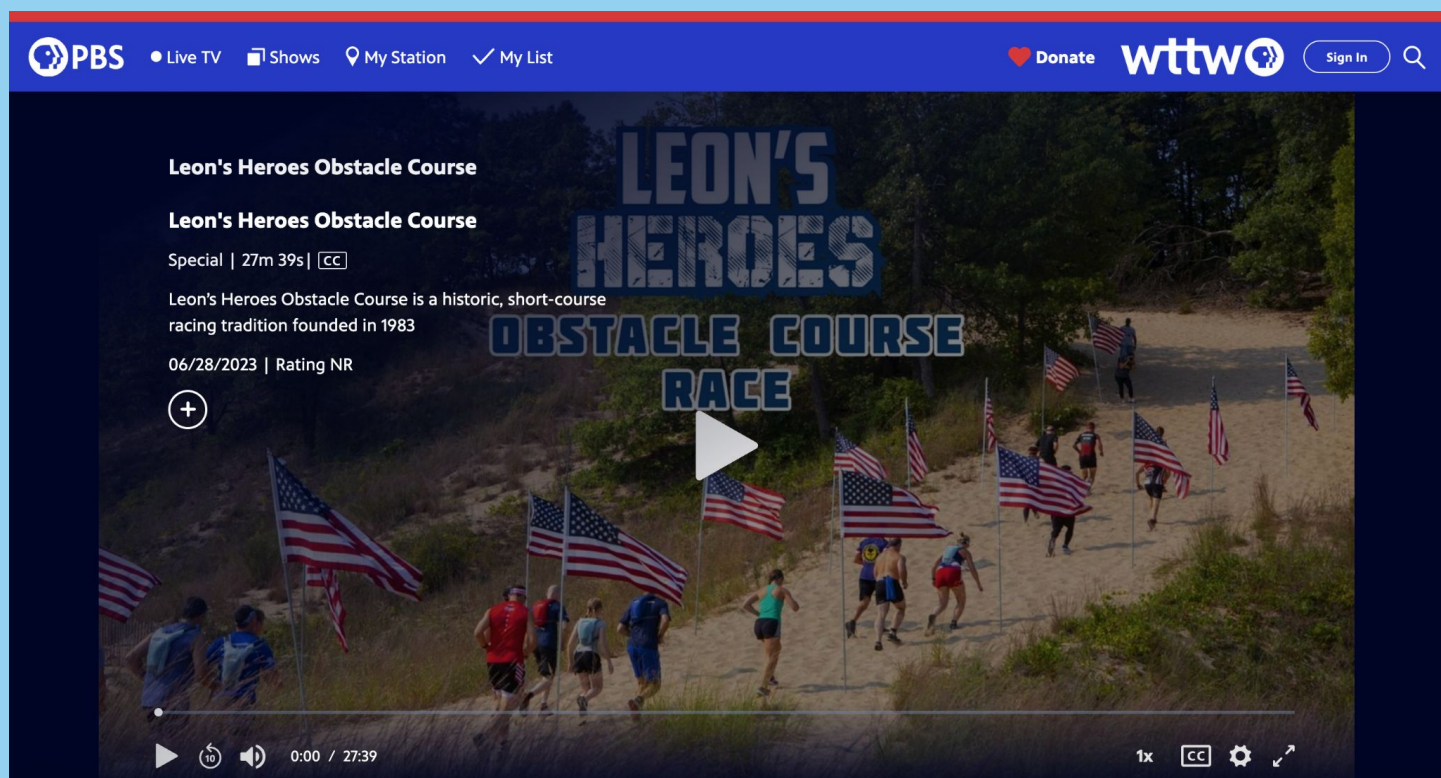
We are grateful for the guidance provided by Kenosha Running Company, whose expertise has helped us understand the importance of proper canine racing gear. For further information, harness fittings, or gear recommendations, we suggest visiting the Kenosha Running Company’s Online Store. Their resources are an excellent starting point for both new and experienced participants seeking high-quality, safe equipment.



Online Canicross Store: <https://shopkrco.shopsettings.com/>
 Fitting Specialist: kenosharunningcompany@gmail.com

POST-RACE RECAP 2024

THANK YOU TO PBS FOR OUR FEATURE



<https://www.pbs.org/video/leons-heroes-obstacle-course-xoq8lz>

Make sure to join us to be
a part of the this year's
National Video!

PARTNERSHIP ALERT

WISCONSIN



TRIATHLON
PLEASANT
PRAIRIE

CHICAGO
TRIATHLON

CHICAGOLAND TRADITION SINCE 1983

AMERICA'S RACE
LEON'S TRIATHLON

ILLINOIS



Early June 2026

Kick off the season with America's Race, featuring the Military and First Responders National Championships

June 28, 2026

Next, discover the beauty of Prairie Springs Park as you compete in Wisconsin's State Championship race

Late August 2026

Wrap up the season in downtown Chicago at one of the largest triathlons in the United States

FOR THOSE LOOKING FOR THE ULTIMATE SUMMER CHALLENGE

WISCONSIN

5 MEDALS

122+ MILES

Conquered over five
races, culminating in
an epic finale—three
back-to-back events
at the Chicago
Triathlon: Super
Sprint, Sprint, and
Olympic distances



CHICAGO
TRIATHLON

**TRIPLE
CHALLENGE
INFO**

1.63 mi

46.3 mi

10.85 mi

END