

Torch Run celebrates national Special Olympics

Written by Greg Viergutz

Thursday, 22 July 2010 20:25 - Last Updated Thursday, 22 July 2010 20:27



Gothenburg joined the Special Olympics National Games celebration Thursday when the Law Enforcement Torch Run stopped at Ehmen Park.

The national games, which are an athletic competition for people with intellectual disabilities, began Sunday in Lincoln.

The Law Enforcement Torch Run is the largest fund-raiser for Special Olympics.

It's actually a series of local, state and national runs and much more. It includes a variety of fund-raising activities such as T-shirt and merchandise sales and special events that raise money and awareness of Special Olympics.

Special Olympics began when Eunice Kennedy Schriver started a summer day camp for children and adults with intellectual disabilities in 1962. That developed into the 1st International Special Olympics Summer Games at Soldier Field in Chicago in 1968. Steamboat Springs, CO, hosted the first winter games in 1977.

The Torch Run started in 1981 as a local event in Wichita, KS. Police Chief Richard LaMunyan conceived the Torch Run as a way to involve local law enforcement personnel in the community and to support Special Olympics.

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After three years of successful Torch Runs in Kansas, the program grew across the United States and was adopted by the International Association of Chiefs of Police as the founding law enforcement organization for the run.



More than 85,000 volunteer law enforcement officers participate in the Torch Run throughout 35 nations, 12 Canadian provinces and 50 states raising more than \$34 million to support Special Olympics programs. Over \$300 million has been raised since 1981.

This year the torch design included Nebraska heritage features like an Indian, a covered wagon, barbed wire, corn and a football.