



OFFICE OF
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Sheriff's deputies carry torch in support of Special Olympics

Port Orchard, Wash. – Four years ago the Kitsap County Sheriff's Office, the Kitsap County Deputy Sheriff's Guild and other local law enforcement agencies banded together to form *Kitsap Officers Supporting Special Olympics* (KOSSO). This year, as in the past three, Sheriff's deputies and executive staff officers have arranged their schedules to participate in various events in support of Special Olympics Washington.

The kick-off event this year will take place on Friday, June 4, 2004, when the Sheriff's Office *Deputy Dawgs Blowtorch Team* carries the Special Olympics Torch, known as the 'Flame of Hope,' during a 26-mile running and kayaking relay through North and Central Kitsap.

The relay is part of a nation-wide *Law Enforcement Torch Run* to raise community awareness to the needs of Special Olympics. The run is Special Olympics' largest grass-roots vehicle: since its inception, some 75,000 law enforcement officers have carried the 'flame' around 50 states and 29 nations raising awareness and funds for Special Olympics.

The *Law Enforcement Torch Run* also coincides with the start of the 2004 Special Olympics Summer Games, scheduled to be held at Fort Lewis, at McChord Air Force Base and at the Weyerhaeuser King County Aquatic Center, June 4 through June 6, 2004.

"I am pleased to join with our deputies and local law enforcement colleagues in supporting this extremely important effort," said Sheriff Steve Boyer. "While there are a large number of outstanding causes that are supported by the Kitsap County Deputy Sheriff's Guild, and this office, Special Olympics has always held an extra-special place in our endeavors towards community involvement. The joy, purpose and accomplishment demonstrated by these special athletes serve as an example for all of us."

Under the leadership of Sheriff's Sgt. Jim Porter, the *Blowtorch Team* will commence their portion of the relay from the Jefferson County side of the Hood Canal Bridge where it will be carried waterborne, via kayak, to Salsbury Point Park located adjacent to the bridge on the east side of Hood Canal. At the park, relay runners will pick-up the torch and carry it east on NE State Route 104, through the town of Port Gamble, then southwards to Poulsbo and on to Central Kitsap via Viking Way, NW, and Silverdale Way, NW, terminating at Silverdale's Waterfront Park. The expected arrival time of the torch relay runners, at Waterfront Park, is between 10:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.

From Silverdale, the torch will make its way to Tacoma in time for the Special Olympics opening ceremony at 7:30 p.m., June 4, in Hangar #3, McChord AFB.

The vision of Special Olympics is to help bring all persons with mental retardation or a closely related developmental disability into larger society under conditions where they are accepted, respected and give the chance to become useful and productive citizens.

Special Olympics Washington provides year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sporting events for children and adult athletes, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympic athletes and the community. More than 8,000 athletes compete in Special Olympics Washington; some one million athletes compete in Special Olympics programs in more than 165 countries.

KOSSO will be hosting a variety of fund-raising events as the summer progresses, to include: the "Cops & Lobsters" dining experience; courthouse bar-b-ques, merchandise sales and more.

This year's goal of KOSSO is to raise \$25,000 for Special Olympic athletes.

Participating KOSSO agencies: Bainbridge Island Police Department; Bremerton Police Department; Kitsap County Sheriff's Office & Kitsap County Deputy Sheriff's Guild, Port Orchard Police Department and Poulsbo Police Department.

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