

Jasper County police run for Special Olympics

Newton Daily News

May 15, 2018



Police and corrections officers smile at the camera after completing the Law Enforcement Torch Run for the Special Olympics. The Run was a total of four miles and included a stop at the Jasper County Courthouse for a picture with Special Olympians.

Officers of Jasper County's finest ran for Special Olympics Monday morning.

Around two dozen officers from the Iowa Department of Corrections, Jasper County Sheriff's Office, Monroe Police Department, Newton Police Department, and Jasper County Conservation came to Newton to run the four-mile Law Enforcement Torch Run, according to organizer Jasper County Sheriff's Deputy Nick Aldrich.

The route stretched from Casey's General Store East on First Avenue and ended at Westwood Golf Course. The runners took a break at the Jasper County Courthouse to catch their breath and take a group photo with Special Olympics athletes and clients of Progress Industries.

Aldrich said public events such as these are important to raise money and awareness for the Special Olympics. He said this is not the only torch run going on.

"Different departments do the same thing all across the state of Iowa," Aldrich said.

Indeed, Torch runs are planned nationwide. Aldrich has yet to attend the Iowa Special Olympics, though he says that's his goal.

He said the run has been going on since he started working at the sheriff's office four years ago. Aldrich has since taken over organizing the Newton-area run along with Dalton Mindham of the Newton Correctional Facility.

The duties of organizing the run have been split down the middle, with Aldrich taking care of contacting the news and coordinating parking while Mindham handles contacting Progress Industries to get Olympians to meet the officers at the Jasper County Courthouse. He also contacted the different agencies, collected T-shirt sizes, lets Progress Industries know the route the officers will take and where to meet them for a photo. They also set up tail cars for the athletes' safety while running in the street.

Mindham said he thought Monday's run went well.

"I think it went fantastic. It is great to get the local law enforcement and DOC involved, as well as Progress Industries bringing the Special Olympics there," Mindham said. "It is nice to see a different side of the agency and meeting up with them."

To Mindham, the run is worth it because of the donations given to Special Olympics which he sees as a great cause.

This is Mindham's first year co-coordinating the run and he sees the turnout as a good one, while calling it a learning experience. He wants to see participation grow among law enforcement officers.

"A lot of it was just voicing it, getting the information out and getting it out to a lot of people," Mindham said.

He said he will try to get more people out next year now that he is more comfortable.

The Torch Run was also big for the supporters of the Special Olympics, like Mike Salyers and his brother and Special Olympian Wayne Salyers — who think the run is important.

"It is good to see community support, especially with law enforcement and having everyone get involved for the Special Olympians," Salyers said.

Salyers said his brother has been going to the Special Olympics for years and will be a participating athlete again this year.

He said the Special Olympics are important to the participants so they can be involved in sports-related activities which they all can do.

"They all come away with a sense of pride and competitiveness," Salyers said.

A fundraising total for Monday's torch run was not available by presstime Tuesday.