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The Special Olympics torch, on its way to Cal State Long Beach for the annual Summer Games, passed through the South Coast on Wednesday, carried by Special Olympics athletes and law enforcement personnel.

Wednesday's leg of the Special Olympics Law Enforcement Torch Run started at 9:30 a.m. at Refugio State Beach Park in Goleta. In the afternoon, Undersheriff Jim Peterson ran the torch to the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department headquarters, 4434 Calle Real, where the department hosted a ceremony.



Leading more than a dozen runners from her office, District Attorney Joyce Dudley carries the Special Olympics torch Wednesday along Coast Village Road.

After catching his breath, Undersheriff Peterson welcomed the torch to South County.

"Today the South County enjoys the flame of hope," he said.

The torch holds personal meaning for Undersheriff Peterson.

"I've enjoyed being a part of the torch run for 25 years now," he said. "My brother has been a Special Olympics athlete for three decades. I remember seeing him smiling and participating in his competitions."

Detective Chris Corbett, president of the Santa Barbara County Deputy Sheriff's Association, presented Sara Spataro, regional director of Special Olympics Santa Barbara, with a check for \$5,000.

"It's an absolute pleasure to partner with the Special Olympics," Detective Corbett said. "There is no better organization for us to support."

Ms. Spataro said the donation will be split equally between North County and South County Special Olympics.

After the ceremony, the torch resumed its journey as Detective Raul Vasquez carried it down Calle Real toward Highway 154. The torch passed between about 100 people from 18 agencies Wednesday as it made its way south to Rincon Beach Park in Carpinteria, where it was passed to Ventura County agencies around 4:35 p.m., Undersheriff Peterson said.

Other agencies that helped carry the torch through South County were the California State Parks Department, California Highway Patrol, UCSB Police Department, Santa Barbara County District Attorney's Office, and Santa Barbara County Probation Office, according to the torch run schedule.

Eighteen employees from the Santa Barbara District Attorney's Office ran the torch through Montecito, said District Attorney Joyce Dudley.

"We're all out there running as a team. From the deputy attorney to the receptionist, we have every department represented.

"It's an honor to be a part of this because you guys inspire us," Ms. Dudley said, as she looked at the three Special Olympic athletes attending the torch ceremony.

One of those athletes, Steve Glick, sporting a gold and a bronze medal, each won in bocce ball, has participated in the Special Olympics since 1992. He lit the torch at Long Beach in 2007, he said.

"I feel proud and happy," Mr. Glick said about carrying the torch.

Ms. Spataro said the athletes will leave Friday for the games Saturday and Sunday.

Mr. Glick said he cannot wait to get there.

"I'm excited about meeting with people, seeing them again and making new friends," he said.

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