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Media Release

NHP Trooper Barbara Stapleton to Carry the Flame of Hope for Special Olympics World Games Los Angeles 2015 final Leg

On Sunday, 14 May 2015, the *Flame of Hope*, the official torch for the Special Olympics World Games Los Angeles 2015, will be lit at the Sacred Site of Pnyx, opposite the Acropolis in Athens, Greece, formally beginning its journey to the World Games. In keeping with Olympic tradition and custom dating back to the Ancient Greeks, the torch will be lit by the sun's rays, and will remain lit until the end of the Games on 2 August. Barbara Stapleton of Minden will serve as a Guardian of the *Flame of Hope* and participate in the Law Enforcement Torch Run Final Leg, the last journey of the flame throughout the state of California. Barbara has been selected by the 2015 Final Leg Torch Run Team Captain, John Newnan, and Special Olympics Nevada to be one of the 126 Final Leg Team members. Law enforcement personnel are selected for this honor by their local Torch Run and Special Olympics program for their dedication and commitment to the Special Olympics movement.

After the official lighting, the flame will begin its journey through all 50 states and the District of Columbia as a part of the [historic Special Olympics Unified Relay Across America presented by Bank of America](#). At the conclusion of the Unified Relay, the Flame of Hope will be handed over to the 2015 Los Angeles Final Leg Team, where it will travel for 17 days to more than 125 cities and towns throughout California, honoring the spirit of the Special Olympics global movement and delivering a message of hope to communities where people with intellectual disabilities continue to fight for acceptance and inclusion. At each stop, the flame will be carried by teams of law enforcement personnel and Special Olympics athletes representing 48 states and 23 countries around the world, on a course allowing thousands of spectators to witness its important journey.

"The *Flame of Hope*'s journey is symbolic of our global mission to deliver inspiration and hope to Special Olympics athletes and their families, break down barriers to equality that still exist, and create awareness for social change worldwide," said Janet Froetscher CEO of Special Olympics, who will participate in the official lighting ceremony in Greece on 14 May. "We are fortunate to be able to deliver the flame and everything it stands for – hope, courage, opportunity, inspiration and equality – to our athletes because of the experience and expertise of our partners in law enforcement throughout the world."

Trooper Barb Stapleton has been with Nevada DPS for over 9 years and involved with Special Olympics for over 8 years. Barbara has been heavily involved with the Law Enforcement Torch Run (LETR) for the past 4 years. Barbara has participated in many tip a cops events throughout the year, as well as, awards ceremonies for the athletes in Northern Nevada, to help raise money and awareness for Special Olympics.

Barbara also participates in unified sports with the Washoe County Athletes. Barbara was chosen to run as a team member for the 2014 US torch run in New Jersey. She was then given the tremendous honor of being a team leader for the 2015 World games in Los Angeles. Barbara is also one of 8 executive board members for Nevada.

Special Olympics is a huge part of Barb's life and she will always live by their motto... "Let me win and if I cannot let me be brave in the attempt" Special Olympics' Athletes are a true inspiration to all they meet. Barb is honored to be able to represent not only the Department of Public Safety/Highway Patrol, but the state of Nevada at the 2015 Letr final leg torch run.

The *Flame of Hope* will complete its journey on 25 July when the Law Enforcement Torch Run Final Leg team carries it into the Opening Ceremony of the 2015 World Games on 25 July, and it ignites the cauldron at the historic Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, site of the 1932 and '84 Olympics Opening Ceremony. The public will be able to see daily photographs, videos and read reports of the *Flame of Hope's* journey online at: letr.finalleg.org

About the 2015 Los Angeles Law Enforcement Torch Run Final Leg

The Final Leg tradition is for law enforcement officers, representing their country, state and Torch Run Program, to act as "Guardians of the Flame" and carry the Special Olympics Torch and "Flame of Hope" to the Opening Ceremonies of the Special Olympics World Games. This Torch Run event is called the Final Leg because it represents the culmination of Torch Run events that have occurred previously throughout the World. The Torch Run Final Leg is not only a salute to the athletes from around the World who will compete in the Special Olympics World Games, but also an honor for the participating law enforcement officers who comprise the Torch Run Final Leg Team. The Olympic flame symbolizes the light of spirit, knowledge and life. With identical power and majesty, the Special Olympics "Flame of Hope," in the entrusted care of the law enforcement community, symbolizes the courage and celebration of diversity that the Special Olympics movement represents. The 2015 Final Leg will precede the Special Olympics World Games held in Los Angeles, California. The Flame Arrival Ceremony is scheduled for the state capitol in Sacramento, California on Monday, 13 July. The flame will then travel throughout the state before reaching the Opening Ceremony in Los Angeles on 25 July. The mission of the Final Leg is to create awareness and excitement for Special Olympics, support and attendance of the World Games, and involve, inspire and motivate runners to increase their level of commitment to Special Olympics when they return to their local Programs.

The Final Leg Team (126 members strong) is comprised of law enforcement runners, Special Olympics athletes, and Logistics Team members from 48 states and 23 countries around the world representing 79 Torch Run programs. Final Leg runners were chosen for their dedication and commitment to the Law Enforcement Torch Run and Special Olympics by their respective Torch Run Programs throughout the world. For more information on the Law Enforcement Torch Run Final Leg for the 2015 World Games, please contact Final Leg Committee Chairman and Team Captain John Newnan at final.leg@gmail.com

About the Law Enforcement Torch Run (LETR)

The LETR began 33 years ago with founder Wichita Police Chief Richard LaMunyon, and five law enforcement officers carrying the torch for the Special Olympics Kansas Summer Games in Wichita. The LETR has since evolved to a volunteer partnership with Special Olympics to champion acceptance and inclusion. It has become a worldwide community of law enforcement officers rallying to support Special Olympics, the impetus for millions of new friendships around the world, and a series of events including Torch Runs, Polar Plunge fundraisers, and Tip-A-Cop® events. The LETR is the largest grassroots fundraiser for Special Olympics with more than 100,000 law enforcement participants around the world. It was announced at the 2014 LETR conference that the LETR has raised a cumulative sum of a half a billion dollars since its inception in 1981 and more than \$50.3 million in 2013 for Special Olympics athletes.

About the Unified Relay Across America

The Special Olympics Unified Relay Across America presented by Bank of America, is a once in a lifetime opportunity for America to unite to build communities of respect and inclusion. Over the course of 46 days, in a hand-to-hand exchange, over 20,000 participants throughout the nation will run, walk or bike a segment of the relay in this team and individual fundraising event, carrying the Special Olympics Flame of Hope across the country and helping to deliver it to Los Angeles for the Special Olympics World Games. The Unified Relay will be three simultaneous routes hitting all 50 states and will be led by celebrity and Special Olympics athlete co-captains and supported by law enforcement officers. The Unified Relay will begin on 26 May, where it will be split into three simultaneous routes starting in Augusta, Maine; Miami, Florida; and Washington, D.C. Traveling west, all three routes will become unified in Los Angeles on 10 July. Along each route, welcoming ceremonies and community celebrations will take place nightly with musical performances, celebrity guests and Unified Sports Experiences. ESPN and ABC are the Official Media Partners of the Unified Relay Across America presented by Bank of America.

About the Special Olympics World Games Los Angeles 2015

With 7,000 athletes and 3,000 coaches representing 177 countries, along with 30,000 volunteers and an anticipated 500,000 spectators, the 2015 Special Olympics World Games - being staged in Los Angeles July 25 - August 2, 2015 - will be the largest sports and humanitarian event anywhere in the world in 2015, and the single biggest event in Los Angeles since the 1984 Olympic Games. The 2015 Special Olympics World Games, with the unparalleled spirit, enthusiasm, teamwork, joy and displays of courage and skill that are hallmarks of all Special Olympics events, will feature 25 Olympic-style sports in venues throughout the Los Angeles region.

The Opening Ceremony, to be held July 25, 2015 in the historic Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, site of the 1932 and 1984 Olympic Games, is expected to attract 80,000 spectators. On April 30, 2014, LA2015 and ESPN announced a global programming deal that will see ESPN bring coverage of World Games to millions of fans around the world. Honorary Chairs of the Games are President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama, with Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti and California Governor Jerry Brown serving as Honorary Hosts. Current Founding Champions and sponsors include The Coca-Cola Company, Mattel, Deloitte, Toyota, Bank of America, Kaiser Permanente, OUE Skyspace Los Angeles, Davis Elen Advertising, Microsoft, Toys“R”Us, Google, UPS, AEG, David Geffen, Kate Capshaw and Steven Spielberg, The Walt Disney Company, Panda Express, and Knights of Columbus.. LA2015, the Games Organizing Committee, is a recognized 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. For more information on the 2015 Special Olympics World Games, including volunteer and sponsorship opportunities, visit www.LA2015.org and on social with #ReachUpLA on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/ReachUpLA), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/ReachUpLA) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/ReachUpLA).

About Special Olympics

Special Olympics is a global movement that unleashes the human spirit through the transformative power and joy of sports, every day around the world. We empower people with intellectual disabilities to become accepted and valued members of their communities, which leads to a more respectful and inclusive society for all. Using sports as the catalyst and programming around health and education, Special Olympics is fighting inactivity, injustice and intolerance. Founded in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, the Special Olympics movement has grown to more than 4.4 million athletes in 170 countries. With the support of more than 1.3 million coaches and volunteers, Special Olympics delivers 32 Olympic-type sports and more than 81,000 games and competitions throughout the year. Special Olympics is supported by individuals, foundations and partners, including the Christmas Records Trust, the Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics®, The Coca-Cola Company, The Walt Disney Company and ESPN, Lions Clubs International, Mattel, Microsoft, P&G, Bank of America, Essilor Vision Foundation, the B. Thomas Golisano Foundation, Finish Line, The Safeway Foundation, and Safilo Group. Visit Special Olympics at www.specialolympics.org. Engage with us on: Twitter @specialolympics; fb.com/specialolympics; youtube.com/specialolympicshq, instagram.com/specialolympics and specialolympicsblog.wordpress.com.