



LAW ENFORCEMENT TORCH RUN

The rest of the story...

Following the Summer Games, LaMunyon went back to the department, and with help of other officers, researched SOKS and discovered that finances were a huge burden. He then asked his fellow officers to help the next year sponsor the banquet and raise \$20,000 to cover facility, food and dance expenses for the fledgling organization.

In 1980 LaMunyon expanded the role of handing out medals and invited all off-duty officers and their families to volunteer and serve the banquet meal. The officers had solicited businesses to fundraise for the event and also sold hats to meet their \$20,000 goal. The officers wore the hats, while on duty, during the week before the games in Wichita, again to help promote awareness of Special Olympics. Several officers attended the games that year, many for the first time experiencing the power and excitement of Special Olympics.

Committed to raise another \$20,000, in 1981, officers brainstormed on ideas. The Wichita Police Department had a running club that met and usually ran during lunch hour. Officer Don "Barney" Ipsen approached Chief LaMunyon about a Torch Run with members of the running club (of which LaMunyon was also a member). The Chief thought it was a great idea. Ipsen set out to find officers and recruited Jack Leon, Jan McCloud, Walt Kuykendall and Robert G Bachman. Kirk Miles, Executive Director of SOKS supplied the torch and also agreed to run. The six original runners would run from City Hall to South High School and carry a lit flame that would light the torch for Opening Ceremonies. Officers would solicit pledges based on how many miles they ran with the flame, to help raise funds for the Summer Games. The idea grew for the torch run to become a year-round fundraiser for Special Olympics Kansas and expand state-wide to other agencies. In 1982 the torch run went from the northern state line of Kansas to Salina, McPherson, to Wichita City Hall utilizing 6 departments and the highway patrol. In 1982, Kirk Miles, Executive Director of SOKS, sat down LaMunyon and began to discuss doing as a national event. LaMunyon approached the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) and Eunice Kennedy Shriver with the concept of making the torch run a specific function for law enforcement. In 1983 the IACP approved the concept.

SOKS and Kansas Law Enforcement Torch Run then invited Mrs. Shriver to Kansas in 1983 to observe the Torch Run at the Kansas Summer Games. Mrs. Shriver spent two days, observed the opening ceremonies with over 200 officers participating and agreed wholeheartedly to the idea.

Over the past 30+ years LaMunyon has traveled and worked extensively promoting and encouraging the growth of LETR throughout the world. What started with ONE agency, SIX runners and \$20,000 in Kansas, now has 85,000 officers and has raised over \$500 million dollars in 43 countries for Special Olympics. The officers serve as Guardians of the Flame during the run and ensure that the Flame of Hope is delivered to the Opening Ceremonies for local, state, national and world games.