

Torch Relay will highlight park ceremony

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OAKVILLE — The Olympic Torch Relay will bring its 13-vehicle caravan through Oakville on June 29 when Lawrence County dedicates the Jesse Owens Memorial Park on the 60th anniversary of Owens winning four gold medals in the 1936 Berlin Games.

Owens' spirit will live again in his Oakville birthplace when grandson Stuart Owen Rankin carries the torch the length of the park to the center stage of activities.

Meanwhile, members of the caravan will sit down to what Owens' park project coordinator James Pinion calls a well deserved hot lunch in contrast to box lunches normally served caravan members.

"We'll be feeding them a buffet-style lunch of barbecue chicken and pork, baked beans, coleslaw and homemade desserts," said Pinion. "We feel like we can do that in the 30 minutes allotted for lunch. We're hoping they enjoy it so much they'll stay a little longer."

A group of special guests and dignitaries will have lunch before the caravan arrives. Pinion said the group will include members of Owens' immediate family and Gov. Fob James Jr., who may arrive by helicopter.

The main course will be catered by a local restaurant, but the desserts will be homemade.

"They'll get a taste of real Southern hospitality," said Linda Robinson, a member of the Special Guest Lunch committee. "We are getting desserts contributed from different people in the county, mainly cakes and pies and probably some fruit. We'll be feeding around 180 people in the caravan, and with the guest and dignitaries, there will be another 100 people."

Some caravan guests already know what Southern hospitality is like since the torchbearers all reside in North Alabama. Although there are 12 residents from Lawrence County in the Torch Relay, there is no guarantee they will run in their home county. But Don

The torch's route in Lawrence County

Here is the proposed Olympic torch route through Lawrence County, according to James Pinion, Jesse Owens Memorial Park Committee Chairman: Gordon Terry Parkway (Alabama 24) from Morgan County to Moulton, left on Alabama 157, left on Lawrence County 187 into Jesse Owens Memorial Park. Exit the park on Lawrence County 203, left on Alabama 157.



DAILY Graphic by Cindy Greene

Wofford of the Olympic Torch Committee in Atlanta said the relay officials "try our best to slot people next to their hometown."

Ms. Wofford said runners will

meet at collection points about an hour before the run begins. They will get their torches and instructions. Torchbearers will be surrounded by five motorcycles when running.

The caravan will enter Lawrence County on Gordon Terry Parkway (Alabama 24) with a bicyclist carrying the torch. It will arrive at a Texaco service station (a collection point) on Alabama 157 at 11:30 a.m. where runners will take about one hour to reach County Road 187. Another collection point is set at the Oakville Indian Museum.

Each runner will be dropped off by the shuttle at the beginning of his or her segment, will light the next person's torch when finished, and can rejoin the shuttle, which will return runners (if they desire) to the original collection point. Each torchbearer will run about one kilometer, $\frac{3}{8}$ of a mile.

Pinion said times are approximate and "have been set based on ideal conditions, but officials have decided to slow it down because they want people to enjoy it."

Regional Torch Relay manager Cindy Bowling in Birmingham said runners will be instructed to walk if it is hot June 29.

Lunch begins at 12:52 p.m. and lasts until 1:22 p.m., at which time Pinion has requested his fellow committee member, Therman White of Oakville, carry the torch out of the park to County Road 203 toward Speake.

A left turn on Alabama 157 will put the torch back in the caravan where it will be carried to Cullman.

Pinion said he hopes Lawrence County will make a lasting impression on caravan members.

"They put in 16 hours a day," he said. "We just want to give them something they'll remember."

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