Special Olympics Gearing Up for Summer

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Erik Wander/KMXT

Local athletes are gearing up for the Special Olympics local summer games. Volunteer coaches are busy preparing athletes for the competition, which is just a couple of weeks away. The event will kick off with a five-kilometer torch run.

The May 16th event will begin with a torch run, a fundraising event sponsored by local law enforcement and benefiting the Special Olympics. Dan Canavan is the community director for Kodiak community Special Olympics. He described the torch run as a 5K "fun run," in which participants gather pledges to compete.

-- (Canavan 1 43 sec. "It's a nationwide event ... fundraising portion of it.")

Canavan said that he struggles with public relations and finding volunteers to coach and perform other duties necessary to sustain a full-range of events, partly because Special Olympics events take place year round.

-- (Canavan 2 50 sec. "Special Olympics is kind of ... active in the community.")

After the torch run, the local summer games begin, with events including power lifting, aquatics and individual skills basketball. Chris Provost, who teaches reading at East Elementary, is the basketball coach. He said athletes have the opportunity to earn two medals in the event.

-- (Provost 1 52 sec. "Speed dribble is its own ... get down those 10 meters.")

Provost, who has been involved with Special Olympics in some capacity since 1974 in Montana, came to Kodiak in 1984 and immediately began participating here. He said the local event is important, because athletes have the opportunity to qualify for the national event and beyond. He also said that there are strict guidelines on practice time in order to qualify nationally in a given event.

-- (Provost 3 34 sec. "They have to qualify ... until the state competition.")

In all, Canavan estimates that 25 to 30 athletes will participate in the local summer games. The State Summer Games take place in Anchorage June12th through 14th, and Canavan expects about 1,000 participants. Through the statewide competition, athletes can qualify to compete in Special Olympics International World Summer Games.

I'm Erik Wander.

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