

# Torch blazes through CSU

*Despite cold, hundreds turn out for Olympic flame*

By JOSH HARDIN  
*The Collegian*

Snow and ice could not stop the fire of the Olympic flame from being passed through CSU on Wednesday.

Hundreds of CSU students, employees and Fort Collins residents packed the Oval and braved falling snow and 15 degree temperatures to get a glimpse of the famed flame.

Despite the cold, many CSU students were optimistic about cheering on the torchbearers.

"It's a once in a lifetime experience," said Jackie Santistevan, sophomore open option major who said she'd be watching the Olympics on television.

"You don't get many chances to see something like this," said Devin Hefferon, freshman wildlife biology major.

Some students had seen the flame pass by them before, but wanted a second look.

"I saw it in come through Colorado in 1984 around Berthoud Pass when I was about 6 years old," said Lejo Flores, a graduate student in Civil Engineering. "I wasn't

coming out to see it this time, but a friend grabbed me in the hall and said I should go. I had an hour between classes so I decided to check it out."

The torch arrived on campus about 25 minutes late due to the task of shoveling and de-icing the Fort Collins streets and the pavement on the Oval after Tuesday night's snowstorm. During the wait, the CSU pep band played on the steps of the Administration Building and event organizers handed out commemorative pennants to the crowd.

When the torch finally arrived at 9:35 a.m. A convoy of vehicles that leads the torchbearers pulled aside on Oval Drive as the torchbearers ran at full speed through the middle of the Oval.

After the passing of the flame many people were left in awe of the speed and attraction of the event.

"It went really fast," said Fort Collins resident Matt Blanco. "I didn't expect as many people to show up."

"I was impressed by the number of people that came out in the cold and were interested to wait it out and cheer the torchbearers," said June Greist, of CSU University

Relations. "I was proud to see it go through the Oval."

Richard Meserve was the torchbearer who entered the Oval. Meserve had received the torch from his brother, Bob, who is a Paralympic athlete. Halfway through the Oval, Richard Meserve handed the torch to Boulder runner Lisa Hawkins.

"It was unbelievable to have my brother hand it off to me," Meserve said. "It was more than I could have ever expected. You don't see all of the people around you until (the flame) moves on."

Other torchbearers with ties to CSU who carried the torch in Colorado include: Matthew Benson, a freshman construction management major who has succeeded in life with no left hand; Loretta Capra, associate director of programs at the CSU Recreational Center, who was paying tribute to a friend who was killed by a drunken driver; Bob Hewett, who works in facilities management and is honoring the one-year anniversary of the death of his son; Tom Sutherland, a CSU professor emeritus and

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former Iranian hostage; Kelly Walker-Haley, an employee of the Department of Health and Exercise Science who was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis and carried the torch in a wheelchair; and Nick Aden, a freshman construction management major.

The torch relay's Fort Collins route began near Poudre Valley Hospital. Torchbearers zigzagged their way to Howes Street and entered the Oval. After leaving the university, torchbearers headed down College Avenue and stopped at the Fort Collins Fashion Mall for a community celebration. The flame's time in Fort Collins ended on Troutman Parkway, where it was moved to make an appearance in Loveland.

"It was an incredible event to coordinate," said Kelly DiMartino, Fort Collins communications and public involvement coordinator who helped organize the event. "It was wonderful to have so much involvement from the community and it truly was a

collaborative effort."

Some Olympic fans decided to view the relay in multiple cities.

"I decided to come and watch here and follow it all the way to Longmont so I could visit my mom, who works there," said CSU graduate Chris Williams.

The relay continued from Loveland to Denver, with exchanges in Berthoud, Longmont and Boulder. It will continue through Colorado stopping at cities such as Denver, Colorado Springs, Vail, Aspen and Grand Junction for the next three days.

The Olympic flame is expected to reach Utah by Monday, and the long trek across the country evoked positive feelings from those who witnessed it.

"Across the country wherever the torch goes it increases people's excitement," Greist said. "I think right now people are feeling very patriotic, and it gives people another way to support our country as well as international unity and cooperation." ■

### Facts about the Torch Relay

- The torch relay will travel more than 13,500 miles across the United States in 65 days.
- There are more than 11,500 torchbearers.
- The Olympic flame will travel an average of 208 miles during a 12-hour day.
- The flame travels via torchbearers, cars and trucks, airplane, train, ship, dog sled, skier, horse-drawn sleigh, snowmobile, ice skaters, ski jumper and other unique methods.
- The Olympic Torches measure 33 inches long, 3 inches wide at the top and one-half inch wide at the bottom.
- The materials in the torch represent ideals of the Olympic games. Glass represents winter and nature, as well as ice and purity. Polished silver represents technology. Aged silver finish represents heritage and copper represents fire, warmth and passion.



JOSH HARDIN/The Collegian

**Torchbearer Lisa Hawkins carries the Olympic flame on the Oval. Hundreds of spectators packed the campus to get a glimpse of the torch relay.**