

Lighting the Way

Rocklin Man Joins Olympic Torchbearers

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Because Rocklin resident Joe Wuelfing worked tirelessly to raise money for families of terminally ill children, his Aunt Anne Pearce of Pioneer nominated him to carry the Olympic torch.



"First of all he's very dear to me," she said. "Watching him through the tragedy of losing his infant son--well I admired the way he handled it. He didn't bow down into depression or sorrow. He didn't let it get the best of him. Instead, he brought something of great good out of this tragedy. I thought that was certainly worthy of being nominated as a torchbearer."

Wuelfing, a marketing communications manager for Cirrus Logic, and his wife Janis have lived in Rocklin for two years. They have two children and one on the way.

"I'm very proud of Joe for being selected to carry the torch and represent the city of Rocklin," Janis said. "He deserves the recognition for not only establishing the foundation, but for being a wonderful dad to Markie. It's truly an honor for our entire family."

The couple used the experience of losing a four-month old baby to an unknown neurological disorder to help other parents. "They fundraise large amounts of money to aid other families who have a dying infant," Pearce said. "It allows hospice to come in and make those last days bearable. They know the pain. He died at home in their arms."

The Markie Foundation was named after their son Mark Warren. It is a non-profit organization dedicated to children's hospice and helping to make a difference in the lives of terminally ill children and their families.

"I'm both honored and humbled to be selected for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," Wuelfing said. "To be recognized, particularly for the Markie Foundation, is something I'll always be grateful for. At the same time, I realize there are many important people in my life, most notably my wife Janis, who have made this moment possible."

Wuelfing believes the privilege of carrying the torch for the United States is significant during a time when the nation has declared war on terrorism.

"Though I'll be the one carrying the Olympic torch, it represents the many people who have impacted my life over the years," he said. "It will also represent the wonderful city of Rocklin, Placer County, the state of California, and the United States of

city of Rocklin, Placer County, the state of California, and the United States of America. We are at a significant point in history, following the September 11 attacks, where our nation--and all that it stands for--shines bright. To be part of this year's Olympic experience, and the unity it brings, means that much more.

Pearce will be with her nephew when he runs. "I get to mark the spot where he starts," she said. "I get to be there when he receives the torch. They call it the collection point."

The torch was lit in Olympia Greece on November 19. It arrived in Atlanta on December 4. The flame arrives at Salt Lake City's Olympic Stadium on February 4 and will be extinguished when the flame end on February 24.

The torch Wuelfing will carry can be purchased as a keepsake for \$335 and an additional \$60 for an engraved stand to hold it. He wants it as a tribute to the foundation and his son's life.

"I was chosen to represent Rocklin. I'll carry that with me while I am running," he said. "I'd like to keep the torch. Instead of my name on the stand, I want the foundation's name to be engraved on it. I feel I was selected as a result of that. This is a tribute to Markie's life."

To contribute to the foundation or help buy the torch, call 415-1462. Or visit the foundation website at www.markiefoundation.org.
