



Friday, January 11, 2002

## OU alumnus carries Olympic torch

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

Oakland University alumnus Eric Suender has had a once-in-a-lifetime experience twice.

Suender, an SEHS graduate who received an Education Specialist degree in June 2001, was one of 84 runners selected to participate in the **2002 U.S. Olympic Torch Relay** in metro Detroit. He also carried the torch during the 1996 Summer Olympics.

During the torch's route through Detroit on Sunday, Jan. 6, Suender received the flame at Woodward Avenue and Seven Mile Road to run his segment. He also participated in ceremonies held at Comerica Park where a cauldron was lit. Suender dedicated his run to Barbara Kimball, a counselor at Lake Shore High School in St. Clair Shores, where he is assistant principal. Kimball died of cancer in mid-November.

"At the time you receive the flame you're the only person holding the torch," said Suender, 33. "I was watching it as I was running and thinking of what it means. It's a symbol of non-conflict, resolution, peace between nations and winning through competition. I also thought of my grandparents and parents – people who had supported me during my life. My wife was very excited for me and running with me along the sidelines and so were some of my students and staff."

Suender ran cross-country and track as an undergraduate at Bradley University in Peoria, Ill. He later taught and coached track at a suburban Chicago high school. In 1996, his students and the track team nominated him to be a torch carrier for the Summer Olympic Games.

"My wife nominated me to carry the torch this year," Suender said. "She realizes all the work I had done for the kids. I was previously assistant principal at Flint Hamady School, and one of the food service workers there also nominated me. She said she was inspired by all the programs I had started at the school."

About 200 state residents carried the flame as part of its 65-day journey across the country. Each runner carried the torch for two-tenths of a mile beginning in Lansing and passing through Okemos, Flint, Royal Oak, Warren, Ferndale and Detroit. On Jan. 7, the torch was carried through Garden City, Livonia and Ann Arbor before heading into Indiana. The **2002 Winter Olympic Games** begin Friday, Feb. 8, in Salt Lake City.

### SUMMARY

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