

Organizers hope for public support during truck convoy for Special Olympics

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Participants of the Special Olympics truck convoy travel on U.S. Highway 281 north of Hastings Sept. 15, 2018.

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WILL VRASPIR

wvraspir@hastingstribune.com

Organizers are asking the public to line the highways to show support for Special Olympics athletes Saturday during the local leg of the World's Largest Truck Convoy.

The Law Enforcement Torch Run Truck Convoy for Special Olympics Nebraska is set for Sept. 19.

Tammy Craig, one of the organizers for the event, encouraged spectators to find open lots along the route and wave to the trucks as they pass. Many semi-trailer truck drivers set up their horns to allow the children to honk

them as part of the event.

Craig said the athletes enjoy seeing the people they pass along the route and would be thrilled to see folks waving in support.

"It's just a great thing for the kids," she said.

The opening ceremony will be at 9 a.m. at the Adams County Fairgrounds. At 9:30 a.m., the athletes will load into the semi-trailer trucks, driven by truckers from around the country.

Tires will start rolling at 10 a.m., leaving the fairgrounds to head east on U.S. Highway 6. At Showboat Boulevard, the convoy will turn south until reach-

ing Nebraska Highway 74. Once they are headed west again, drivers will head to U.S. Highway 281 and take that back north to the fairgrounds.

Officers from area law enforcement agencies provide an escort and traffic control for the event.

Festivities for the event start Friday with a barbecue and game night for the drivers and athletes. It's a way for the two groups to reconnect and fellowship. The athletes also receive tickets to the Mid-States Finals Rodeo that evening.

Truckers or their employers pay an entry fee to be part of the

convoy, which benefits Special Olympics Nebraska. The event also enjoys sponsorships from other businesses, individuals and organizations. The Nebraska convoy — one of about 36 convoys that take place in states around the country — raises around \$17,000 per year.

Special Olympics Nebraska provides programming in the areas of sports, health, education and leadership to more than 7,600 individuals with and without disabilities each year.

"The drivers give up a lot of their time for these kids," Craig said. "It's neat to see how far they come."