

Running events provide viable fundraising option around Northfield

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Fundraisers take on a variety of forms across the nation, but in Northfield, running events have become one avenue that combines fundraising with a healthy activity.

Entry fees for running events are often affordable for participants, who can feel satisfaction from completing an event and satisfaction in knowing their money will go toward a good cause.

A quick scan reveals several runs scheduled for the fall, including the Big Woods Run, which took place Oct. 10, a Monster Dash is scheduled for Oct. 31 at Northfield Golf Club, a Zombie run Saturday at Carleton College and a 5-kilometer run/walk at Northfield High School Saturday to raise money for NHS student Ethan Brinkman, who is battling cancer.

Other activities include the annual Turkey Trot on Thanksgiving Day for the Northfield Rotary Club, along with the Circle the Lake run. There's also the Jesse James Bike Tour, the Tour de Save, the Jingle Bell Run and the Defeat of Jesse James Days 5K/15K run among other fundraising events.

The group, Carleton Runners Enjoying Every Pace, will hold a zombie race for the second consecutive year with the proceeds going to Northfield's HealthFinders Collaborative. The race combines fun with running. Participants will be divided into zombies and humans. Humans will try to outrun zombies while zombies will try to grab flags from humans to capture them. Obstacles will line the course for humans to give the zombies a chance to capture them.

The Monster Dash event will raise funds for Kyle's Shooting Star Foundation, which provides assistance to families who have children dealing with an illness.

"We really try to meet overall needs for the family that other agencies don't," Kyle's Shooting Star Foundation founder Heidi Simon said. "Those stressors over time really wear on every one over time."



Circle the Lake Run

Runners near the finish line at the Circle the Lake Run in Millersburg. (Nick Gerhardt/Northfield News)

Simon started the foundation in honor of her son, Kyle, who passed away after a two-and-a-half year battle with cancer. Kyle was diagnosed with Rhabdomyosarcoma at 2-and-a-half years old.

The foundation has helped 28 families in the past year on a budget of around \$5,000.

The Big Woods Run has been held for the past 19 years and attracted around 500 people this year. The run has raised \$80,000 in that time.

The Circle the Lake Run, which entered its fourth year, raised around \$7,000 this year to help with cleanup projects for Circle Lake. The event drew 253 runners this year.

The Northfield cross-country teams put together a 5K walk/run event Saturday as a fundraiser for teammate Ethan Brinkman, who is battling cancer.

The DJJD 5K run drew 343 finishers and the 15K featured 70 finishers. Registration for the run cost \$25 up to a certain date and then rose to \$30 after that date.

Candy Taylor, executive director of Northfield SHARES, which hosts the DJJD 5K/15K event, said the run is a good fundraising event because it's fun, healthy and goes toward a good cause. The runs are not only family-friendly, but are also affordable for participants.

"In my opinion the key for a non-profit, you have to have someone or a small group who has a passion for doing this that will champion the effort," Taylor said.

Putting on a race comes with some costs, however, ranging from the timing chips some races use, to having an ambulance on site, creating T-shirts and having insurance for the event. Chip timing can cost a little over \$1,000 for events based on the number of participants.

For the Circle the Lake Run the largest expense is T-shirts, race director Dean Sunderlin said. That's followed by the cost of the timing chips.

"You try to make it safe and make it fun and hope for the best," Sunderlin said. "To this point we've been supported really well."

There are businesses that will put together a race for organizations as well. The cost of those services varies but can be substantial.

"It's not for everyone," Taylor said. "They are a lot of work."

Both the DJJD run and the Circle the Lake run rely on volunteer support and sponsors to make both events profitable.

Getting a consistent number of participants has become increasingly difficult as well. Both Sunderlin and Taylor said their events had lower numbers this year, which they attributed to saturation in the market.

Outside of Northfield, other running-centric events raise a large amount of money.

Team Ortho of Minneapolis puts on several races, including the Monster Dash in St. Paul each year. Other races include a Polar Dash, a Get Lucky, St. Patrick's Day themed run, the Minneapolis Marathon, Minneapolis Duathlon, Women ROCK run. Team Ortho donates money to Shriners' Hospital, Orthopaedic Trauma Association and the Minneapolis Medical Research Foundation.

Then there's the Warrior Dash, an obstacle course style race that raises money for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. According to the Warrior Dash website, more than \$10 million has been raised through the events.

With the interest in running and participating in races at such a high level now they will remain a viable option for fundraisers.