

# Organizing a 5K... Where do I begin?

---

*“For every finish-line tape a runner breaks - complete with the cheers of the crowd and the clicking of hundreds of cameras - there are the hours of hard and often lonely work that rarely gets talked about.” -*

*Grete Waitz*

## **Why host a 5K?**

At its essence, a 5K can be a fundraiser for, and an opportunity to increase awareness about, virtually any issue. If you feel passionate about a topic, you can create an awesome 5K event. Part of your decision will be based on the needs in your community and what other causes 5K races in your community already address.

- Emphasize health message and caring for our bodies in a positive way
- Bring community together
- Raise public awareness and perception of church as caring community member
  - Research shows that there is a correlation between community service and church growth. One of the factors in growing, urban churches is that they are involved in their community. The development of creative, authentic social action ministries and then learning to integrate social action with soul-winning is one of the major areas needing experimentation by Adventist congregations today. (See *Mission in Metropolis: The Adventist Movement in an Urban World*, by Monte Sahlin, available through AdventSource).
  - “The world will be convinced, not by what the pulpit teaches, but by what the church lives.” Ellen White, Testimonies Vol 7, p. 16.
  - We cannot reach a community for Christ by standing outside of it. Unless the Adventist Church is seen as making a significant contribution to the needs of the community, it will not be taken seriously by civic leaders.
- Support a worthy cause in YOUR community (childhood obesity, affordable housing, after-school programs for children, helping the homeless, helping unemployed individuals prepare for and find jobs, providing primary health care to under-served communities, literacy tutoring, etc. ). 5K races can be formatted for any charitable cause.
  - Many organizations choose to combat diseases such as AIDS, diabetes, and various types of cancer. Although massive events admirably run by organizations such as the American Cancer Society do exist, local smaller scale events can still make a considerable impact. To begin brainstorming, think about whether someone important in your life/church/community has been touched by an illness, and if you would want to donate funds to an established medical organization in their name. If you do choose to base your event on the prevention/treatment of a disease, do some preliminary research on the condition. This may focus your interest and increase your awareness of the impact of the illness on your community. Additionally, find out if you can partner with a local hospital, clinic or physicians to obtain sponsorship and guidance for the event.
  - Another flourishing motivation for 5K races is environmental causes. Environmental issues can include: climate change, deforestation, clean energy, wildlife conservation, poaching, animal welfare, etc. This type of cause may lack the personal connection that a race based on someone afflicted with a disease could garner, but by emphasizing the

- global impact of many of these issues and properly presenting damage being done to current ecological conditions, you can create huge enthusiasm. Take note that some environmental issues may be politically charged. Just remember that for everyone who does not participate because they disagree with your view on climate change, for example, many others who feel strongly about the topic are likely to notice your event.
- Some races are motivated by traditional social issues like world hunger, poverty, illiteracy, homelessness, and shortages of school supplies. These types of causes have specific faces behind the tragedy, and exist all across the country and in other nations. One of the greatest attractions of these causes is the chance to sponsor a specific school with funds or provide support for your own local food pantry or homeless shelter. In one northeastern city, when a child passed away from a tragic bicycle accident, several citizens created a huge 5K in his name, “Run for Cody,” in order to contribute funds for a favorite park he liked to play in. This type of personal connection can really give an event momentum. Connecting a specific cause to a community can greatly increase participation and unlock access to the resources of local institutions and businesses.
  - Before finalizing your cause, consider if any other major events in the area work towards the same goal and whether the appeal of your cause is broad enough get the attention of your community. If you plan on partnering with an organization or a hospital for the event, research more about those institutions, and especially find out if they themselves hold a similar fundraising event!
  - Choosing your cause will guide many of your decisions down the road. Be sure that you feel fully committed to a specific issue.

## ***Integrating soul-winning with a 5K***

- **Following Christ’s Example (MH 143)**
  - “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled *[suggests social interaction, involvement in the community, a position of concern, friendship and caring]* with men as one who desired their good. He showed *[to display or demonstrate, not just talk about something; to act out works of compassion as a way of conveying the reality of our friendship and God’s love for them]* His sympathy for them, ministered *[another word for servant]* to their needs, and won *[because we mingle, show compassion and meet needs in the community, there is a level of trust that builds up and individuals and groups begin to take the representative of Christ seriously. At this point, we have won a hearing for the Gospel.]* their confidence. Then *[means that Christ waited until certain conditions prevailed before He felt free to begin to talk about spiritual things... suggests that it is inappropriate and unchristlike to attempt to communicate the Gospel message prior to winning the confidence of the individuals or group in our community]* He bade *[Ellen White suggests that the place to begin in presenting the Gospel comes before extensive study of Bible doctrines. Rather it is made on the basis of the active, personal witness of Christ’s values]* them, “Follow Me.” (From *Mission in Metropolis: The Adventist Movement in an Urban World*, by Monte Sahlin)
- **Ideas**
  - Offer 5K coaching and practice runs for first-time runner/walkers prior to event (relationship building, prayer before training, etc.)
  - Include literature in race packets (Vibrant Life special issue, brochure about Adventists, local church newsletter)
  - Mingle! Have church volunteers to chat with the runners before/after the race.

- Plan an open house, ministry/health fair, kids activities, or other event at same time
- Door prizes (participants get tickets to place in containers for various prizes, such as items donated from ABC and/or local Christian book store, certificates for services that members can donate – oil change, snow removal, resume update, tax return, etc.)
- Before start of race, introduce our faith, why we're hosting run, and have prayer
- Have inspirational scripture signs on course that utilize running metaphors
- Give God glory at award ceremony. Introduce pastor, who gives short devotional thought. Or invite a guest speaker.
- Follow-up letter thanking runners for participating/sponsors and inviting them to other events or community projects. Send out notes as quickly as possible following your event, and do not skimp on personalization. Sending out notes to sponsors on church letterhead encourages them to aid your organization next year. Notes to participants also encourage future participation, but they are also crucial when they go to write-off contributions to your organization on their federal taxes. These thank you notes should include a reference to the monetary contribution they made to your event.

## ***5K Timeline & Organization***

The time it takes to plan a 5K race depends heavily on the schedules of those organizing the event. For the purposes of this guide, the race will be based on a 6-12 month timeline. This timeline is only an estimate and should be adapted to the needs of your race team. This guide suggests the order of steps to be taken, but the procedure can be reordered depending on your team's needs.

### **6-12 months before race day**

- Preliminary planning
  - PRAY!
  - Talk with organizational leader, other interested members (especially runners)
  - Talk with community members re: needs, similar events, potential partnerships
  - If relevant, discuss with Church or School Board. You eventually will want to write proposal and submit for approval, which is important for risk management issues.
- Create a planning team
  - Race Director (sponsors, publicity, permits, budget, insurance)
  - Registration Coordinator (forms, publicity, race bibs, pins, packet prep)
  - Course Marshal (measure, map, mark, cleanup)
  - Volunteer Coordinator (recruit volunteers, assign jobs, training, race day coordination)
  - Awards Coordinator (design, order, giveaways, ribbons, announcer, ceremony)
  - Food Coordinator (donations, pre-race day pickup, race day distribution, aid stations, clean up)
  - Logistics Coordinator (identify possible conflicts, railroad schedules, road construction race day, businesses on route conflicts, lead vehicle, follow vehicle, coordinate during race communications)
- Choose a cause
- Set a date/time for event
  - Avoid conflict with other community events

- Mornings are best (so runners have the rest of the day)
- Measure and lay out course
  - Choose location - neighborhood of church, local park (may have reservation applications and fees)
  - Keep needs of both runners and the community in mind
  - Pick low-traffic areas
  - Plan for runners to face oncoming traffic
  - Plan for traffic directors at every intersection (police assistance may cost)
  - Plot route - straight course, or turn around?
  - Measurement – Hire someone to measure and certify course for accuracy. Bicycle computer and car odometer not accurate. GPS close, but not accurate. USATF certified courses will yield greater participation. <http://www.usatf.org>
  - Bathrooms? Or will you need porta-potties?
  - Get permission for use of the facilities where the race will start and end
  - Create map and directions to include with registration forms
- Plan budget
  - Income
    - Entry fees. Recommend setting late registration price increase of at least \$2 at the 2 week out point to help get early entries, then very late registration day before race and race day jump of \$5 for added incentive to register early
    - Sponsors' contributions
    - Fundraising
  - Expenses
    - Awards
    - Tshirts (contact local supplier, sporting goods store, or locate ads for suppliers online or in running magazines)
    - Equipment purchase/rental
    - Paper/printing costs of entry forms
    - Misc supplies (banners, balloons)
    - Refreshments
    - Course-marking materials
    - First-aid kits
    - Race sanction/insurance
    - Course certification, timing
    - Advertising
    - Postage
    - Bags for race packets
  - Remember that some costs are only incurred in your first year of running your race.
- Begin fundraising and solicit sponsors
  - Fundraising
    - First year, awareness only
    - Offer fundraising coach and hold workshop re: fundraising strategies
    - Team Sign-ups – Give manila envelopes for team captains (list names of walker/runners, amount raised, details of event, sample scripts, etc.)
  - Sponsors (community organizations and/or businesses)

- Can raise much more money than through individual fundraisers
  - If needed, hire sponsor coordinator and pay 15% of funds raised
  - Create proposal describing who you are, mission, how sponsorship would benefit them (name on advertising, tshirts, promotional material in runner bags, etc.)
  - Donations (coupons and items for runner bags, refreshments, door prizes)
  - Sponsor signs along course (facts about cause)
  - Sponsor levels (unrestricted for event expenses and/or cause)
  - Obtain logos for inclusion in advertising, entry forms, tshirts
- Contact police (public gathering permit), transportation departments, and local government for information about necessary permits, and obtain written permission to hold race. Notify ambulance, fire department.
  - Hire professional race timers to provide fast and accurate results for your race. Dates fill fast and it is always wise to secure contractors early.
  - Obtain insurance:
    - Contact Conference treasury or appropriate institutional department for information regarding insurance. Partnering organizations may need to provide certificate of insurance.
    - Apply for a sanction for the event from local USA Track & Field Association

#### **4-5 months before race day**

- Get funding
- Start to recruit volunteers (registration, water stops, first aid, cheerleaders, minglers, leader for fun run)
- Begin public relations and advertising
  - PSA on local television and radio
  - Local papers and magazines to feature articles or list in calendar of events
  - Local organization newsletters
  - Local schools (cheer leaders?)
  - Running publications and websites. List on Runnersworld.com race calendar
- Design website, if using
- Work with t-shirt company on design and ordering information
- Make up map of the course
- Design and print entry form and other necessary forms. Include the following information:
  - Date and starting time(s) of race
  - Start and finish site(s), directions, transportation, parking information
  - Race distance
  - Course description (include terrain, landmarks, mile markers, elevation)

- Course map
  - Course certification number, race sanction with USA Track & Field
  - Sponsoring/assisting organizations
  - Age groups/awards
  - Time/location of award ceremony
  - Amenities (tshirt, refreshments, meal, etc.)
  - Tshirt/package pickup information
  - Race information contact/address/email/phone
  - Entry fee , entry deadline, check payable to, mailing address
  - Race limit, if applicable
  - Other related activities
  - Request name, address, phone, age, DOB, sex
  - Obtain signature acknowledging Waiver of Liability (parent or guardian if under 18)
- Select and locate awards (Trophies for top three male and top three female finishers, medal for top three in each division)
  - Order bibs. You can pay for custom bibs or get free bibs from [www.RoadID.com](http://www.RoadID.com)

### **2-3 months before race day**

- Arrange for equipment
  - Sound system
  - Megaphone
  - Starting gun & blanks
  - Tables, chairs
  - First aid kit, ice, blanket
  - Cones, flags, directional signs, chalk for lines, mile markers for mile 1, 2 and 3, chute materials (stanchions, rope)
  - Barricades
  - Stop watches for mile split callers
  - Communication equipment (walkie talkie, cell phones)
  - Water coolers & trash cans for water stations
  - Cashbox & change
- Marketing
  - Flyers/entry forms at area businesses
  - 30-40 flyers/entry forms at sports and running shoe stores, gyms, fitness centers
  - Direct mail to previous participants
  - Flyers/entry forms at all local races prior to your race
  - Neighborhood flyers
- Start processing entries
- Plan ceremonies

### **1 month before race day**

- Obtain/purchase additional supplies

- Safety pins for bibs
  - Cups
  - Trash bags
  - Paperware & utensils for refreshments area
  - Pens for registration tables
- Prepare information kits for the media
  - Verify availability of facilities (bathrooms, electricity, sprinkler timing, keys)
  - Verify any borrowed, rented, and purchased equipment, and delivery of such equipment. You should order everything by the end of the month.

### **Month of the race**

- Review and practice finish line procedures for recording each runner's time and place
- Pick up any equipment not already obtained
- Pick up finish line food donations or purchase (bagels, granola bars, bananas, water)
- Registration packet and runner bag assembly with volunteer meeting. Have all volunteers come to a meeting at least 3 days prior to race day to get their tshirt and to get any information about their particular job at the race. While there, they can help in assembly of any packets you would like pre-made for Pre-Registered and Onsite Registration. Runner bag to include timing/starting lineup information, course map with mile markers and water station, freebies.

### **Race day!**

- Set-up should begin 2-3 hours before race time. The more runners expected, the earlier you should start. It's better to be over-prepared!
- All planning team members present and performing their assigned tasks
- All volunteers to report to their team member
- All race officials present
- All equipment on site
- Facilities open and inspected (gates/doors unlocked, toilets open, supply of toilet paper, electricity available and turned on). Have cell number of facility manager just in case.
- Course marked
- Barriers set up
- Water stations in place
- Starting and finish line marked
- PA systems working. Announce start of race 30, 15, and 10 minutes prior to race.
- Parking organized
- Signs, banners, balloons up
- Registration/information tables up
- Aid stations ready. Touch base with police and medical personnel
- Mileage markers on course
- Timing devices working
- Timer ready at finish

- Chutes set up
- Chute crew in place
- Finish line recorder set up
- Photographers in place (for participants photos and/or documentation)
- Post-race refreshments set up
- Lead vehicle or bike to sweep course before start
- Call runners to starting line, make pre-race announcements, traffic or weather announcements, remind runners they must tear off bib number at finish line, have prayer
- Tally results
- Award ceremony to begin in a timely fashion. Present awards.
- Thank all sponsors and volunteers for their participation
- Return or store equipment

#### **Race day follow-up**

- Post race meeting/party with team and volunteers. Evaluate and make list of suggestions for next time.
- Pay any outstanding bills in a timely manner.
- Send thank you notes to volunteers and all other individuals or groups who helped
- Send thank you notes to sponsors (in-kind and money), facility owners