

Award Title

Dean of Students Half Marathon Challenge and Food Drive

Awards Categories

Athletics, Recreation, Physical Fitness, Non-Varsity Sports and related

Executive Summary

The Half Marathon Challenge is a three-month long program implemented annually by the Dean of Students at Trinity University in San Antonio. The program includes several training runs per week, educational sessions, social gatherings, and a community food drive. From planning to completion the program spans eight months (April-November) annually.

The arrival of the San Antonio Rock 'n' Roll Marathon/Half-marathon (<http://runrocknroll.competitor.com/san-antonio>) in 2008 coincided with the development of the Trinity University Student Affairs strategic plan. That plan identified health, wellness and community service as divisional goals.

This local race, which attracts 25,000 participants each year, allows the Dean of Students to combine a personal passion for running with a professional passion for student education, growth, and development.

Over the past four years hundreds of students, faculty, staff, parents, and alumni have participated in the Trinity training program. The stated "challenges" are related to attempting the 13.1 mile race and serving the community to reduce hunger and address homelessness. As the group is told at the beginning, while running is an individual sport, running groups routinely run for a cause to support others. Our charity is the San Antonio Food Bank. In the third year of the program over 1,100 food items and \$650 were collected and distributed.

Trinity's location adjacent to a wealthy neighborhood and in proximity to downtown offers opportunities to run routes in a variety of areas that demonstrate the chasm between various socio-economic classes. The imagery can be jarring and underscores the disparity between various living environments in our own community.

Not only do students improve conditioning and assist the community, but they experience other benefits as well. Group runs allow for unique and time intensive interaction between students and staff. Running with students week after week has led to relationships that have brought students into the Dean's office for other issues those students were facing.

The program allows the University to make a bold statement to the San Antonio community. The Trinity bookstore sells participants running shirts at cost. A sea of maroon-clad Trinity runners (100 strong in 2010) is visible to community members cheering along the route. In 2010 the Trinity group placed first (based on number of participants) in the race-wide Get Fit Challenge competition, large corporation division.

Seeing the friendships develop between runners and within staff, faculty, and students groups is incredibly gratifying. By race day, the group has formed a cohesive, open, and supportive community. Students are exposed to older role models, connecting with others who are living their values through action in later life. Their involvement has made this a broad-based and uniquely Trinity program.

Award Description

The program features several weekly group runs (including one increasingly longer run) from August through November. These runs create connections between new and returning students and staff.

Seminars with outside presenters on topics such as buying proper shoes and equipment, running technique, and nutrition offer learning beyond the classroom.

Socially, the program features informal post-race dining opportunities, a Dean-sponsored taco breakfast at a restaurant in the community, a pre-race pasta dinner at the home of the Dean, and group transportation to the running expo and race. The President of the University, a former runner, addressed the group at the 2010 pre-race dinner (moved to dining hall because of rain in 2010). <http://www.youtube.com/TUStudentAffairs#p/u/34/rkPC-sOVWPw>

Additionally, several runners with stories of interest were featured in the Dean of Students blog in the third year of the program. The series was called "Strides." It featured stories of Crohn's sufferers, a cancer survivor, and an alumna who works with the homeless. (Scroll down in the following link to see all the stories.) <http://trinitydean.blogspot.com/search/label/Running>

In 2010 Trinity graduate Kayla Mire tragically passed away in a one-car accident. She had worked with the Dean of Students to complete her degree after suffering mental illness and was also an ardent supporter of the homeless. This year, the food drive was named in her honor. Her parents spoke to the runners at the organizational meeting. <http://trinitydean.blogspot.com/2010/10/underdog-forever.html>

The program is connected to institutional values about learning, impact, discovery, the individual and the community. <https://sites.google.com/a/trinity.edu/trinitytomorrow/home/stra/mission-values-vision>

Thus, students are taught about their own mental and physical capabilities through challenging their limits; have impact on the community through the food; discover their local surroundings by learning a variety of running routes; grow individually; and connect and support the community.

The Student Affairs division is in the fourth year of a five-year strategic plan. <http://web.trinity.edu/x4938.xml>

The strategic plan charges staff members to develop strategies that enhance student learning and development with several identified outcomes, including health and fitness. The division has tied its strategies to the Social Change Model. <http://web.trinity.edu/x4940.xml>

Because of the residential foundation of Trinity University (three-year requirement to live on campus), programs that model and instill values related to long-term healthy living have been identified as high priorities. The assessment results, as included, indicate that a majority of the participants will view running as a lifetime fitness activity, that they would likely participate in the event in the future, and that they consider themselves to be runners.

Because of the popularity of the program, the Dean of Students collaborated with Academic Affairs, the Curriculum Council, and Physical Education to set-up a one-credit half marathon training course that would overlap with the training. The course was offered for the first time in the fall of 2010 and is offered this again this fall.

Several faculty members have joined their students participating in this program and have made important connections. An engineering professor purchased a Trinity shirt for race day for one of his students who couldn't afford it. They were both program participants.

What is more, several of the students in the program have brought their passion in the area of homelessness and are now collaborating with faculty and staff to develop a program on homelessness.

During a recent run, one of the student leaders literally ran up to a professor and closed the deal on his involvement by asking him to participate personally.

While the program is about health and wellness and becoming involved in the community through the food drive, training together has allowed for many other positive benefits. The long runs feature routes along the famed San Antonio River Walk and local parks. One run takes the group through the Pearl Brewery Farmer's Market. Another includes a run to a nearby lake. One weekend run, informally dubbed the "homelessness run," winds through the neighborhood with San Antonio's homeless shelters. This run is designed specifically to contrast the placid wealthy neighborhood routes early in the training with the stark reality of the more needy areas of our community. <http://trinitydean.blogspot.com/2009/11/taking-low-road-homeless-dont-run.html>

The training and run is regularly featured in the campus newspaper, the Trinitonian. A post-race ad features the names of all the runners and their individual times in the race.

<http://www.trinitonian.com/2010/11/19/students-train-for-san-antonio-rock-%e2%80%99n%e2%80%99-roll-marathon/>

In order to effectively communicate to participants and others about this program, technology and electronic media has been used extensively:

- Survey monkey for sign-up and shirt orders

- PowerPoint presentation (example)

www.trinity.edu/departments/student_affairs/Second_Annual_Dean_of_Students_Half_Marathon_Challenge.pptx

- Facebook group page

http://www.facebook.com/home.php?sk=group_217392948285200&ap=1

- Map My Run <http://www.mapmyrun.com/run/united-states/tx/san-antonio/889059162092>

Year One <http://trinitydean.blogspot.com/2008/11/skys-limit.html>

Year Two <http://trinitydean.blogspot.com/2009/11/heavy-medal.html>

Year Three <http://trinitydean.blogspot.com/2010/11/half-marathon-challenge-2010-rocks.html>

The Dean of Students Half Marathon Challenge has tangible outcomes for all participants. Participants receive a race medal and commemorative shirt, but more importantly, develop a passion for running and fitness and learn about the importance of helping others. The program has sustained itself over four years, grown in numbers and scope, and is meaningful, not only for students, but many others, including the event coordinator.

Assessment Data

The Annual Dean of Students Half Marathon Challenge and Food Drive is assessed annually through an electronic survey. Participants are asked about their satisfaction with various portions of the execution of the program and about learning outcomes. The results have been used each year to improve the program, which has seen an increase in participation each passing year.

Half Marathon Challenge Training Program - Key Findings

Common Learning Outcomes Personal and Leadership Development A. 1. Identify personal values, beliefs, and attitudes (Consciousness of Self). 60% learned a lot and 37% learned a little about their mental stamina; 63% learned a lot and 31% learned a little about their physical stamina. These results have been consistent through three annual assessments. A. 2. Articulate an experience that demonstrates how individual actions supported expressed values. (Congruence) - Specifically about motivation to run following the decision to live a healthy lifestyle. 23% learned a lot and 57% learned a little about health. A. 3. Identify the completion of a set goal. (Commitment) - Specifically, completing the training and the race. 60% learned a lot and 31% learned a little about putting commitment to action. Again these results are consistent with past results and 100 participants completed the program. A. 5. Learn to create shared aims and values for a group. (Common Purpose) - Specifically, sharing the running experience with other runners and the community. All runners surveyed found the social/community aspect of running together excellent (37%), very good (29%), or good (23%). Health and Wellness B. Make informed choices that result in healthy behaviors. 7.25% learned a lot and 57% learned a little about how to make choices that results in healthy behavior. This is consistent with past results.

Program Outcomes - Students will identify a challenge (training for the race) and then complete the set goal as a lifetime milestone (participating on race day). 67% of those surveyed rated the challenge as the top reason for participation and 44% rated the milestone as the second highest reason for participating. This was shown in the first assessment results as well and appealing to these aspects is now accentuated in pre-program marketing. - Students will consider themselves as “runners” following the program. 39% reported being much more enthusiastic about running than before the program; 39% reported being slightly more enthusiastic. - Students will learn that running is a viable lifetime fitness option. 100% reported that they intended to continue running

Analysis The Half Marathon Challenge has grown from 46 participants in its first year, to 80 in the second, and 100 in the third year of the program. In part, the popularity of the program is growing as it receives more exposure and it grows because in years two through four, many participate again. After the fourth year of the program the number should level out.

The program costs are primarily incurred by the individuals, who purchase their Trinity shirts to wear on race day and are responsible for the event registration. The Dean of Students Office pays for a post-race ad to congratulate the runners and two meals. Other input has been used to improve the program, from the number of group runs offered, to the style of shirts, and in improving logistics.

The spirit of the program, the enthusiasm of the runners, and the consistently positive results in terms of satisfaction and outcomes ensures that this will be an ongoing program for as long as the current Dean of Students is at Trinity University.

Half Marathon Challenge Food Drive - Key Findings

Common Learning Outcomes Personal and Leadership Development A. 1. Identify personal values, beliefs, and attitudes (Consciousness of Self). 25% learned a lot, and 50% learned a little about the value of caring about the basic needs of others. These results have been consistent through three annual assessments. This is consistent with past results, though slightly lower, probably because of the number of repeat participants. A. 2. Articulate an experience that demonstrates how individual actions supported expressed values. 30% learned a lot, and 58% learned a little about putting commitment action and working with others toward a shared goal.

Program Outcomes - 17% learned a lot and 58% learned a little about hunger in San Antonio. - 1,100 items and \$650 collected.

Social Responsibility D. 1. Identify contemporary social issues. 31% learned a lot and 49% learned a little about being more conscious of hunger issues. D. 2. Articulate how individual and collective action can impact the local community. 31% learned a lot and 47% learned a little about relating running to charity. D. 3. Engage in action for positive change in the community... (Citizenship) 1,100 food items and \$650 donated to San Antonio Food Bank.

Analysis The Food Drive continues to be an integral part of this program. The donations increased and then hit a plateau in the third year. By adding student participation at collection points and personalizing the Food Drive in the name of Kayla Mire, the donations should show

an increase in the fourth year. Most importantly, students are learning important issues related to the community.