



IT'S NOT HOW FAST YOU GO.

5K

IT'S THE DIFFERENCE YOU MAKE.

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RELAY FOR LIFE 5K  
IMPLEMENTATION GUIDEBOOK

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## WELCOME

Thank you for your interest in implementing a 5K or race event to support Relay For Life and/or the American Cancer Society. The information provided in this guidebook is intended to be just that – a guide. We hope you find it valuable as you embark on creating your own 5K event; however, we encourage you to think outside of the box and not be limited by the parameters and suggestions included – you know your community best!

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## OVERVIEW

### VOLUNTEERS

Hosting a 5K as a fundraiser is a great way to raise money for the American Cancer Society, but one person cannot do it alone. One of your first steps should be recruiting a committee of volunteers to help plan AND implement the event. Be sure that you have enough people lined up to help solicit for prizes and/or donations, assist with set-up on event day, man the check-in station and water/snack stations, and to help clean up. When looking for volunteers, consider asking your family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, church members, local girl/boy scout troops, high school students in need of service hours, etc.

Below are some sample roles/responsibilities you may want to consider:

#### **Race Committee**

- Race Director
- Registration Coordinator
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Sponsorship
- Refreshments
- Media
- Survivor (if they will be a focus at your event)

#### **Event Day**

- Packet pick-up
- Registration table
- Bag check
- First aid
- Start line/finish line
- On-course water/aid stations
- Course set-up (mile markers/directional signs)
- Post-race refreshments
- Clean-up

# JOB DESCRIPTIONS

## PLANNING THE RACE

### RACE DIRECTOR

- Recruit committee members (i.e.; Registration Coordinator).
- Contact possible sponsors.
- Determine entry fee.
- Create entry form.
- Promote event.
- Secure supplies/vendors.
- Prepare the race site.
- Prepare information packet for runners.

### REGISTRATION COORDINATOR

- Maintain accurate count of incoming registrations.
- Assist Race Director with securing supplies/vendors, including:
  - Race timer
  - T-shirt/giveaways
  - Race bib numbers/safety pins
  - Drawstring bags for packets
  - Awards
- Work with Volunteer Coordinator to determine number of volunteers needed for packet pick-up.

### VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

- Stay in close communication with the Race Director and Registration Coordinator to determine the number of volunteers needed for all race activities.
  - Begin recruiting volunteers to fill positions.
  - Provide job descriptions/expectations.
  - Create and distribute a FAQ sheet for volunteers.

## RACE DAY

- Post all course/directional signage.
- Ensure all communications are intact.
- Assemble start/finish area.
- Designate a medical area.
- Set up water stations.
- Have refreshments available.
- Be sure awards are onsite for presentation.
- Set up any additional balloons, banners, fencing, tents, etc.

- Assemble pre- and post-registration tables, including:
  - List of pre-registered runners
  - Number/T-shirt/packet pick-up
  - Safety pins
  - Cash box
  - Entry forms and pencils

- Ask all volunteers to arrive as early as possible to race site.
- Review race events/timeline/expectations.
- Communicate any changes/corrections to participants and volunteers.
- Provide instructions for contacting EMS or medical team if needed.
- Manage clean-up crew.

## POST-RACE

- Send thank-you notes to all involved (sponsors, volunteers, etc.).
- Distribute a press release with results to local media.
- Post follow-up stories from event on website.

- Send a thank-you email to event volunteers.

# SAMPLE TIMELINE

Included below is a sample timeline for a 5K run/walk as a guideline for planning your event. This timeline is not meant to be fully comprehensive, but should serve as a guide as you and your committee begin planning your event. If you are starting your planning with less than six months to go before race day, don't panic! Six months is the suggested time needed for planning the event; however a committee can successfully plan an event in a shorter amount of time. This "Race Planning Timeline" is a sample guide and may not be applicable to all races. Adjust the timeline and add or remove tasks as needed.

## 6 MONTHS OUT

- Secure at least 5-6 people to serve on the event planning committee.
- Assign duties within planning committee, including tasks for:
  - Race Director
  - Registration Coordinator
  - Volunteer Coordinator
- Decide:
  - Where your event will be held?
  - Will the event be a timed or fun run?
  - What type of run will it be?  
(theme, glow, color, fun)
- Make of list of the sponsors you would like to ask to be your race partners.
- Formulate a race budget.
- Determine fee schedule.
  - Will you have an early-bird fee or late registration fee?
- Set levels of sponsorship.
- Will you have underwriting opportunities?
  - Timing
  - T-shirts
  - Finisher medals and other awards
  - Water stops
  - Porta-johns
- Create a sponsorship opportunity document.
- Set your participant and financial goals.
- Determine how often and when the planning committee will meet.
- Decide on the name of your event.
- Will you have a hashtag?
- Create an event timeline.
- When is sponsorship due?
- When will you order T-shirts? (Will depend on your supplier, but expect two to three weeks for delivery.)



## 5 MONTHS OUT

- Begin making corporate sponsor asks.
- Consider asking a sponsor to underwrite the following:
  - Timing
  - Finish line
  - Water stops
  - T-shirts
- Arrange insurance for the event.
- Decide what outlets you will use to promote your race
  - radio, local TV station, newspaper, flyers, social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc.).
- If restrooms are not available at your race site, coordinate porta-johns.
  - Where will you need them (at the start, finish, mid-way, etc.)?
- Ask local media outlets (radio, newspaper, etc.) if they will be in-kind sponsors.
- Plan your race course.
  - If you are advertising a 5K, it should be a 5K distance. Consider using a USATF-certified course (as this may yield greater participation).
- Hire a timing company (if you choose to use one for your race).
- Secure event location.
  - Begin obtaining any necessary permits.
  - Talk with city authorities (police, etc.) to find out what will be required on race day.
- Identify a race registration platform.
- Design (or have a company design) your race logo. Your logo should appear in all materials.

## 4 MONTHS OUT

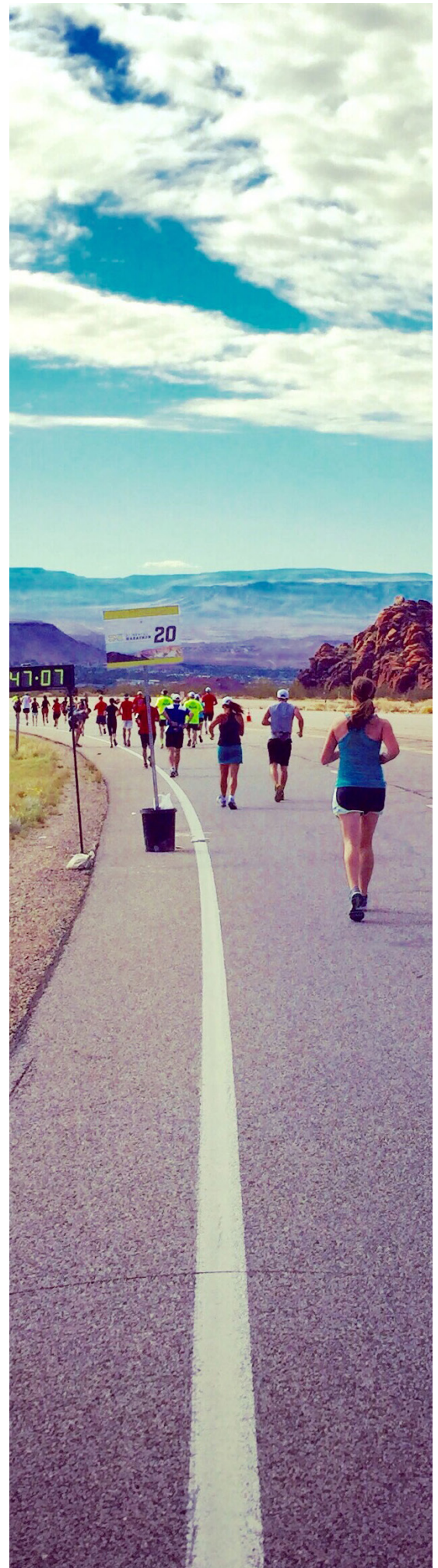
- Create a race map.
- Order race bibs.
- Place race entry forms at local running stores/clubs.
- Advertise through other local running events.
- Set a deadline for T-shirt orders.
- Reserve any race course equipment needed:
  - Barriers
  - Timing equipment (company)
  - Sound system
- Open registration:
  - Place race entry forms at local running stores/clubs and advertise through other local running events.

## 3 MONTHS OUT

- Reach out to local schools, civic organizations, church groups, etc., to find race day volunteers, if needed.
- Continue making sponsorship asks.
- Establish social media presence.
- Advertise in as many places as possible.

## 2 MONTHS OUT

- Follow-up on sponsorship asks.
- Begin communicating with volunteers and assigning specific tasks.
- Publicize your race course.
- Decide on age groups for awards.





#### 1 MONTH OUT

- Order awards.
- Advertise event on local TV/radio/news stations/billboards, etc.

#### 3 WEEKS OUT

- Consider ending early registration and raising the registration rate.
- Finalize sponsorship list.

#### 2 WEEKS OUT

- Order T-shirts. (Depending on your T-shirt vendor, you may need to order earlier.)
- Advertise location/time for packet pick-up.

#### 1 WEEK OUT

- Assemble registration packets (bags, give-aways, etc.).
- Finalize information with race site personnel. Will you need any keys? Tables? Chairs? Check toilet paper availability at restrooms.
- Communicate with participants: packet pick-up information, race start time, parking instructions for race day, and any other important event details.

## RACE DAY

- Set-up registration tents/late registration area.
- Set-up water tables along the course as well as water/food at the finish line.
- Announce start of race 30, 15, and 10 minutes prior to race and thank all sponsors and volunteers for their participation.
- Call runners to starting line and make pre-race announcements, including traffic or weather alerts.
- Announce winners and present awards.

## POST-RACE

- Plan wrap-up meeting with your event committee. Review what went well and what needs to change for the following year.
- Send thank-you letters to all sponsors, both in-kind and money sponsors.

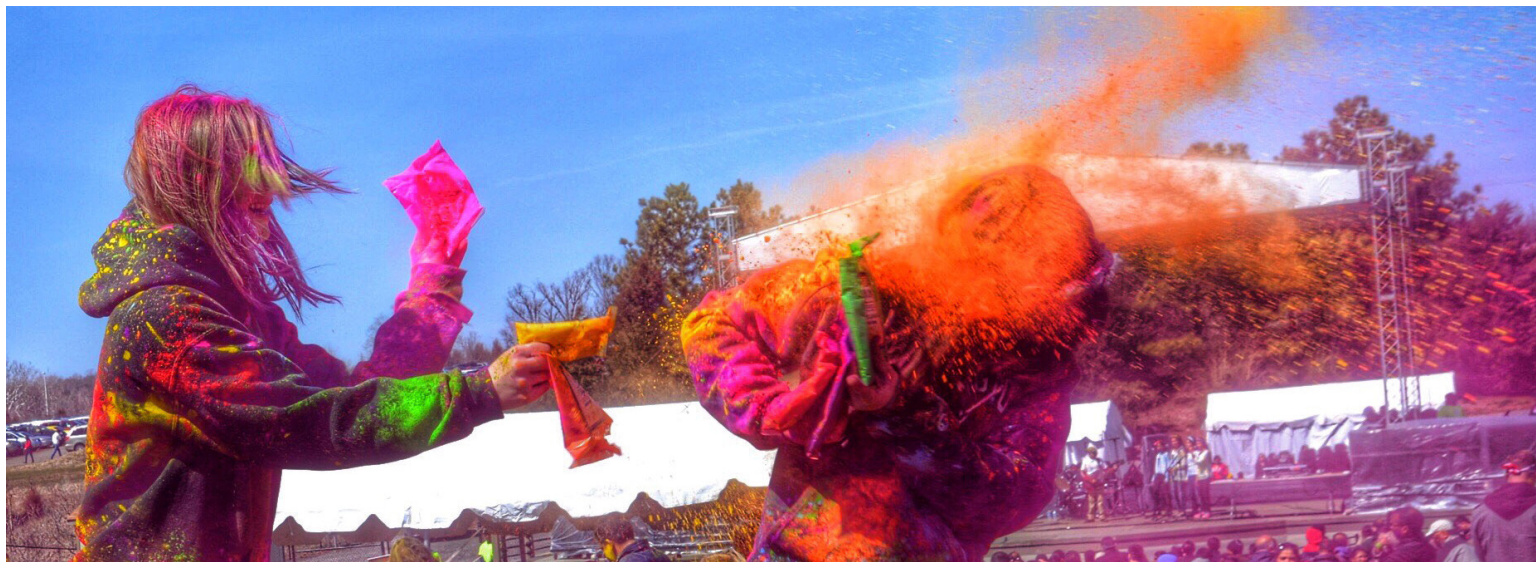
⚡ When planning your event, be sure to put yourself in the “runner’s shoes” and consider their needs (parking, picking up race bibs, finding restrooms, etc.) to ensure a positive experience overall.

# SAMPLE BUDGET

Use this sample budget for a 5K run/walk as a guideline when planning your event. Your event may be larger or smaller based upon your theme, total participants, age ranges eligible to participate, and whether the event is sanctioned and timed vs. a fun run. Study your local market to determine what similar races charge, and set the registration fees accordingly for your own event. Your planning committee's goal should be to secure enough sponsorships to cover each expense line item in the budget. Your committee should also take into consideration the projected profit margin and always plan for an event with a positive return on investment.

| INCOME                  |  |                 |
|-------------------------|--|-----------------|
| Race Registrations      | 300 x \$25 each  | \$7,500         |
| Sponsorship             | T-shirts   | \$1,750         |
|                         | Awards – plaques and medals                                  | \$850           |
|                         | Insurance  | \$350           |
|                         | City permits   | \$200           |
|                         | First aid personnel  | \$100           |
|                         | Course security/police                                       | \$100           |
|                         | Race bibs  | \$75            |
|                         | Timing (optional)*   | \$1,200         |
|                         | Course certification (optional)*                             | \$350           |
| Donation                | Bottled water, fruit, bagels for course                      | In-kind         |
|                         | Poster/flyer printing  | In-kind         |
|                         | Porta-johns (2)  | In-kind         |
|                         | Flyer placement in local running club mailing                | In-kind         |
| <b>TOTAL INCOME</b>     |  | <b>\$12,475</b> |
| EXPENSES                |  |                 |
| T-shirts                | 1 per registered participant/volunteer = 350 x \$5 per shirt | \$1,750         |
| Awards                  | 10 plaques @ \$10 each + 300 medals @ \$2.50 each            | \$850           |
| Insurance               | 1 policy per race  | \$350           |
| City permits            | 1 per race   | \$200           |
| First-aid personnel     | 1 team for event @ \$50 per hour for 2 hours                 | \$100           |
| Course security/police  | 1 team for event @ \$50 per hour for 2 hours                 | \$100           |
| Race bibs               | 1 per registered participant = 300 X \$.25 each              | \$75            |
| Timing                  | 1 per participant (optional)                                 | \$1,200         |
| Course certification    | 1 per race (optional)  | \$350           |
| <b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>   |  | <b>\$4,975</b>  |
| <b>TOTAL NET INCOME</b> |  | <b>\$7,500</b>  |
| <b>PROFIT MARGIN</b>    |  | <b>60%</b>      |

\*Notes – certain items in the budget, like T-shirts and awards, may be classified as in-kind depending on the donation agreement with the sponsor and vendor. Police and first-aid personnel may be willing to donate their time depending on local policies. Items like timing chips and course certification are optional based on the race type that your group decides to plan. Keep in mind that this is a sample budget, so your event's income, expenses, and profit margins will vary based upon the local market where the event is being planned.



## TYPES OF 5K EVENTS

Why run the same old 5K when you can race in a superhero costume, or decked out in your beloved 80's gear? Whether you're looking to dress up, get doused with color, tackle obstacles, or get in on some unlimited Twinkie action, the list below of the most incredible themed races around has something for everyone.

When putting this list together, fun was at the top of the list; but we also considered the hilarious memories you'll gain along with the satisfaction of knowing you ran for a lifesaving cause. Whether you take these ideas or create something new and fresh for your community, it's time to lace up those kicks and let the creative juices flow, because . . . we're off!

### THEMED/WEARABLE RUN

- High Heel Hustle
- Superhero
- Bad Prom Dress
- Pink Out
- Mustache Dache
- Cupid's Undie Run
- Zombie
- Glow
- Color
- Jingle Bell
- Monster Dash
- Fancy 5K
- 80's Neon
- Black Light Run
- Strollin' Colon
- Average Joe Flip Flop Run
- Daredevils

### OBSTACLE RUN

From wall climbs and hurdle jumps to mud pits and tire swings, obstacle races are popping up all over. Many may think obstacle courses are for the elite athlete, but that's not the case; many events accommodate all fitness levels. You could spend your Saturday binge watching shows on Netflix, but wouldn't it be more fun to do something crazy fun like an obstacle 5K?

- Mud or Dirty Girl
- Warrior Dash
- Inflatable 5K
- Empire State Building (run up stairs inside a building)

### EAT/DRINK AND RUN

Who doesn't dream of a doughnut break during their run? Why not have participants race from hot dog vendor to hot dog vendor? Whether they eat or drink during the race or enjoy the yummy eatable when they finish, this is a fun way to attract all types of runners!

- April Fool's Day Twinkie Run
- Hot Chocolate 5K
- Krispy Kreme Challenge
- NYC Pizza Run
- The Corndog Challenge
- The Wicked Wine Run
- Chocolate Race
- Cupcake Hustle
- Beer Run
- Purple Kool-Aid
- The Burger Bust

# VENUE/COURSE

Considerations in choosing a venue and the course for your race include the following:

- 1 Hills or no hills? Paved roads or trails?** Most runners like to avoid hills, and your chances to attract more runners may depend on the course you choose, so think carefully when deciding where to hold your race. The same goes for trails, as most people don't have experience running on trails – but both hills and trails offer a unique experience.
- 2 Does the course have stop signs or red lights?** These could present some logistical issues, so plan the route accordingly with traffic guards if choosing routes with stop signs or red lights.
- 3 Will the course I choose require police officers to direct the runners through traffic?**
- 4 Loop course or out and back?** If you loop your course, make sure that it is properly marked so runners do not get lost along the course or cross paths with the other runners and get confused. Some races are one way and would potentially require transportation back to the start or clear instructions to guide participants back to where they may have parked.
- 5 Will I need a course permit?** Check with your local government to see if a permit is required and verify if insurance is needed for the venue you are planning.
- 6 Is there ample parking for participants?** The more people you attract to your race, the more parking you will need. Parking should be in a safe location, preferably at a school or venue that has open parking where people are not required to park on the street and have to pay for parking.

# TIMING/CERTIFICATION

Another aspect of putting together your 5K is the decision of timing and certification. It would be a marketing benefit to your race if the course is both timed and certified. If you decide to hold a “Fun Run,” no timing and certification is required; just be sure to advertise that it will not be an official timed event.

## TIMING

When using a timing service, you need to consider pricing and technology. Request bids from several timing companies in your area and review their experience, background, and technology used. Timing services could become a big part of your budget, so you will want to select a timer wisely. Here are a few other pointers around timing:

- You can find timing companies by searching online, contacting organizations who have hosted other local races, or checking results from other local races. Personal recommendations are always best.
- Pricing varies widely, depending on the size of the event. Expect fees anywhere from \$500 to \$1,200. Some companies will charge a minimum set-up fee plus an additional fee per runner.

## CERTIFICATION

While an accurate course is critical, a certification program may also be important to the average road racer, as well as those of exceptional speed. Most runners like to compare performances run on different courses, and such comparisons are difficult if course distances are not reliable. No one can truly establish a personal best if the course distance is not accurate. Check out the [USTAF](#) information on course certification as an additional resource in making the decision whether you want to certify your course. Another option to enhance your “Fun Run” non-certified event would be to use a stop watch and announce the times as each person finishes.

# LOGISTICS. MATERIALS. SUPPLIES.

## LOGISTICS

Things to consider when planning your 5K event.

**NOTE:** While these tips are broken down into “pre,” “race day,” and “post run” sections, the details for all time frames will need to be planned before the event.

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## PRE-EVENT

### Communications

You'll want to consider how best to communicate effectively with your participants; this will depend on the type of contact information you collect during pre-event registration. Participants will need detailed information for event day, including: date, location, arrival time, parking, and where check-in, restrooms, refreshments, and first-aid stations are located. Examples of good pre-race methods of communication could include an online registration site or email blast like MailChimp.

### Supplies

As with any event, you need to determine what supplies will be needed and where you will get them. Here are some tips and suggestions for making sure you have what you need:

- Keep your costs at a minimum by soliciting donated items. Consider asking local businesses to support your event by donating the following:
  - Bananas, protein bars, post-run snacks
  - Cups for water station(s) – paper cups are industry standard
  - Items for race bags
  - T-shirts
  - Printing services (signage, banners, etc.)
  - Prizes (are you giving out race medals?)
- Tables – determine how many will you need and whether you will rent them or have them donated.
- Do you need shelter for your check-in location, water stop or refreshment station? Pop-up tents may be needed, unless the weather is not a concern or if your host location already has a pavilion or gazebo that could be used.
- Consider what your host location currently has and/or what it may be lacking.
  - Are there trash cans? If so, do you need to provide can liners?
    - *If there aren't trash cans, consider contacting your local trash removal company and see if they would be willing to donate the trash receptacles (and removal services).*
  - Are there restrooms? If so, do you need to provide toilet paper or paper towels?
    - *If there aren't restrooms, consider asking a porta-john vendor to donate their services in exchange for sponsorship recognition. Or, consider contacting the businesses local to your host site and asking them to open their restrooms for your racers (having them post “Restrooms for 5K” on their exterior door may bring potential new customers in their stores); if utilizing local businesses, be sure to publicize them to your runners.*

## SET UP

Plan ahead. Is there anything that can be done the day/evening before your race? Can the course be marked ahead of time? Tables set up? Signage put out?

# EVENT DAY

## SIGNAGE

Directional signs are a must. Where should your participants park? Where is check-in? Restrooms? First aid? Marking the appropriate areas will help your participants feel more comfortable, minimizing frustrations and creating a better experience.

## CHECK-IN

Consider having more than one line to speed up participant check-in, and ensure that you have extra volunteers in place to hand out goody bags, T-shirts, etc.

## WATER STATION

Having a water station halfway through the course is recommended. Consider having volunteers fill up cups and pass them out as the runners move through the course. In addition, having water available at the end of the course, with a few snacks (bananas, protein bars, etc.) is also recommended.

## COURSE SAFETY

You'll want to ensure that the location of your 5K is safe for participants. Is the event in a closed environment, or will roads need to be closed? Is the course well marked, free of holes and tripping hazards, etc.? If the event is taking place in the evening or at night, is it well lit? Are there signs and barriers in place to ensure motorists are aware of runners? Print maps with course details, including where to locate volunteers and police.

## SECURITY

If you're collecting donations/registration fees on site, you may want to have some form of security present. Consider asking a local law enforcement officer to donate a couple hours of his/her time at the check-in area.

## FIRST AID/MEDICAL

At a minimum, be sure to have a first-aid kit on hand and ensure that the first-aid station is clearly marked. Depending on the size of your event, you may decide that having more than one (in different locations) would be wise. It may also be a good idea to connect with the local rescue squad and see if having a unit stationed on site would be possible. Have or know the location of an EKG that can be deployed. If medics are not on site, contact the local emergency response unit to make them aware of the event.

# POST EVENT

## CLEAN-UP

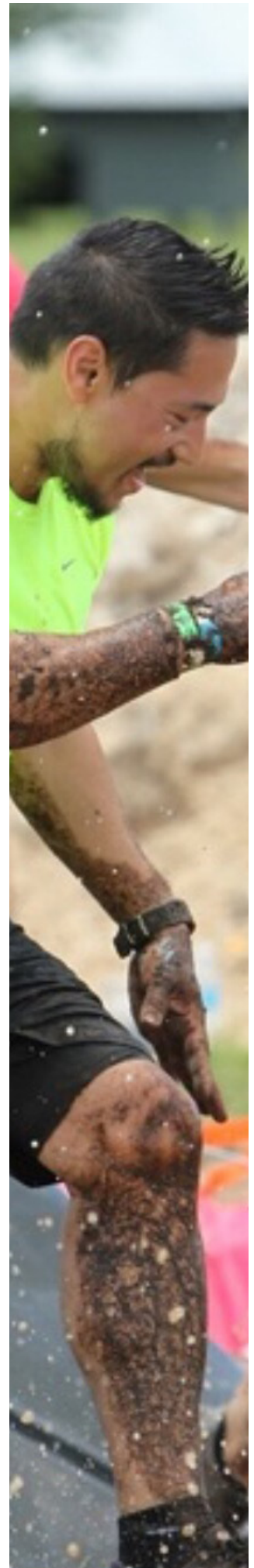
While your participants have hopefully had a blast, they're not likely to hang around after the run to help you clean up, so be sure to have designated people ready to help tidy up the space. Consider asking a separate group of volunteers (perhaps a local scout group) to arrive at the end of the event and help with clean-up.

## SAY "THANK YOU"

This one seems like common sense, but forgetting to express appropriate gratitude can have an impact on the success of future endeavors. Be sure to not only thank your sponsors for any in-kind or cash donations (tables, water, food, etc.), but also think about those who volunteered their time to help as well. A simple hand-written note or thank-you email will go a long way.

In addition to personally thanking those who helped orchestrate the race, is there a public way to thank everyone who participated? Consider using social media or traditional media outlets (the same newspaper or local TV station that promoted the 5K may be willing to do post-event promotions).

**Bonus:** In addition to feeling recognized for their participation, your runners will also appreciate knowing that they played a part in raising \$XXXX for the American Cancer Society.





## RECRUITMENT/ PROMOTION

Recruitment and promotion can make or break your 5K event! No matter the size of your community or event, it is critical to have a strong recruitment/promotion plan. Here are a few things to consider:

- Publicize your event using a variety of mixed media (TV, radio, print, social media, event calendar listings, word of mouth, etc.).
- Ensure you are promoting your event in places that will reach your desired audience (athletic clubs, running stores, civic organizations, etc.).
- Don't forget to promote this opportunity within your current Relay constituent base – encourage participants to invite their friends and family who may be interested!
- Be sure to include all pertinent details in your promotion – date, time, race details, registration fee, and of course that the race benefits Relay For Life and the American Cancer Society.
- Set a recruitment goal/timeline based on your event date and financial goal.
- Recruit and promote early and often!

## WEBSITE

There are multiple website providers you can use to set up your online race registration website. The American Cancer Society offers one option called Rai\$e Your Way. See below for instructions on how to use this tool:

- Step 1:** Go to [RelayForLife.org/raiseyourway](https://RelayForLife.org/raiseyourway) and click the option to “Set up your fundraiser.” This will register your race with the American Cancer Society.
- Step 2:** After registering your race, click the button to create your TicketSpice account.
- Step 3:** Build your own race website where you can:

- Customize your site.
- Create different registration types with different fees.
- Promote your site in your community.
- Run registration reports to make sure people are accounted for on race day.
- Collect money from TicketSpice and turn it in to the American Cancer Society to receive fundraising credit for your local Relay team.

## PRODUCT

We are currently in the process of developing product recommendations for 5K events, such as T-shirts and race bibs. Please check back for more information.

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1.800.227.2345 | [RelayForLife.org](http://RelayForLife.org)

