



Organizing the Walkathon

One of the most common fundraisers of all time is the walkathon. Many organizations have utilized this proven fundraiser to draw in large numbers of new donors and volunteers that they would have never had otherwise. Some of these groups include the March of Dimes, American Heart Association, American Lung Association, National Right To Life, and many more.

The CORD coordinator should immediately begin looking for someone to head each of the following departments:

1. Traffic Control

Finds a suitable walk site; contacts city officials and police; completes proper permits; recruits members to help manage the route; arranges for communication; secures traffic cones and tape to mark the route; secures orange vests for all volunteers along the route (city may provide these).

2. Hospitality

Set up a well-planned meeting point that will handle large amounts of walkers; set up a tent with tables and chairs if available, for the walkers after the race; plan for a stage with audio/visual equipment; provide refreshments for participants; provide a pleasant atmosphere as people gather with music, musicians playing, or a carnival like atmosphere complete with clowns, etc. (or choose your own theme).

3. Publicity

The key factor in promoting the walk will be an aggressive person in charge of this department.

This person will have the responsibility to get the word out well in advance of the walk; Contact businesses with forms; notify the chamber of commerce;

civic organizations; write and send TV and radio press releases; provide recognition for all volunteers that have helped put the function on; provide an announcer or speaker during the event; make sure any dignitaries in attendance are properly recognized; obtain banners and signs from sponsors (i.e. local Coca Cola or Pepsi bottling plant, etc.).

Start promoting this to chamber of commerce and other civic groups a year to eight months in advance so that they can put this on their calendar of events schedule; set up speaking engagements four to five months before the walk at local civic organizations, schools, colleges, etc.; two to three months prior to the event, start contacting your newspaper, TV and radio contacts to determine the best way to get the word out; have these media outlets to be a sponsor.

4. Prizes

Responsible for procuring prizes, awards, and certificates; ask local or national businesses for prizes and gifts.

5. Registration

Responsible for properly recording all participants as they enter; coordinating with the Prize Coordinator ensuring proper recognition of special fund raisers; hand out walk related souvenirs/mementos to participants as they arrive; collect any monies and sponsor forms that are brought in making sure that proper accounting is made for each participant; report on the amount raised at the event; help set up a database so that all donations are accounted for and administered rightly.

Key Points

Planning the Route

In planning the five kilometer or three mile walk, organizers must consider the age, number of participants, physical capabilities and the supervision to be provided. Organizers should also consider:

- ♣ the type of surface and terrain to be covered
- ♣ avoiding or minimizing crossing of roads
- ♣ availability of off-road areas or footpaths
- ♣ potential dangers of obstacles
- ♣ areas of possible congestion along the course
- ♣ areas where shade is available for rest purposes

The route nor the nature of the activity should be so strenuous to place the participants under physical duress. Everyone should be encouraged to walk at their own comfortable pace. Environmental conditions must be considered as well. If necessary, the event should be postponed.

Dehydration can be an issue. Walkers must be encouraged to consume fluids prior to, during and on completion of the walk. Water must be available at the start and finish areas with drink stations established at regular intervals. Participants should also be encouraged to carry their own water containers.

If needed, participants should be dispatched from the starting area at suitable intervals and in appropriately sized groups to avoid any congestion and assist staff in supervision and control. Should the activity allow, consideration should be given to starting the more earnest participants first.

Course officials, particularly those located at course extremities should have access to a communication link. A mobile phone is desirable at check points in case of an emergency. Also, several well-equipped medical kits must be readily available and placed at strategic points along the route. Asthma medication should be carried by participants as required.

Final Month Preparations

The entire planning group should be meeting weekly to make the final preparations. You should be getting your publicity in final gear. The CORD coordinator or Publicity coordinator should be attending radio talk shows, television interviews and have newspaper stories written about the walk.

All participants should be contacted by phone and reminded about the walk and that you hope to see them there. Challenge them to get two more sponsors over what they were planning. If your participants have email, then email them twice in the last month. There should be words of encouragement from the Acharya and/or President of your center and final instructions before attending the race.

Supervision

Parents or caregivers must be fully informed of details of the nature of the event, required clothing, etc. Walkers are to be instructed to wear comfortable footwear and clothing, use adequate sun protection, a hat, etc.

Volunteers should be adequate in relation to the number, age, special needs and the nature of the location where the walk is planned

There must be frequent check points established which are monitored by the walkathon team to direct walkers and deal with any potentially dangerous situations that may arise (i.e. crossing a road, etc.) – this may involve having appointed individuals walk alongside the participants

At The Event

Team members should be wearing special gear to be able to be identified by walkers in case help is needed.

Volunteers should meet on site well before all other participants are invited. Breakfast may be provided to encourage this punctuality.

Keep everything upbeat. Have many announcements. Display the prizes and/or awards. Have your registration tables clearly marked and staffed. Be sure to have plenty of cash to make change. Anticipate medical emergencies and alert local EMS to standby (ask them to be there for free). And have a good time!

After The Event

Make sure the total amounts raised are reported to the media and to all participants and their sponsors. Have the Acharya and/or President personally contact the walkathon team heads. In closing, be sure to ask them if they would like to be placed on the team for next year.