

5K run to benefit Promise Scholars program

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Tis the season and if you need any further proof, the upcoming 5-kilometer Reindeer Run and Rudolph Dash should provide generous evidence that the city of Ontario is full of holiday spirit.

And it wants to spread it all around, especially to youngsters who dream of one day pursuing their educations or to those who never even dreamed about it in the first place.

The city of Ontario is sponsoring the second annual event and invites the community to come out to support it. All proceeds will benefit the Promise Scholars program. The Promise Scholars is a partnership between the Ontario/Montclair School District, Chaffey Joint Union High School District, Chaffey Community College, Cal State San Bernardino, Cal State Bakersfield, Cal Poly Pomona and many community partners. College access is supported by the promise of scholarship assistance for all OMSD students who finish high school through the Chaffey Joint Union High School District and go on to one of the partner colleges.

The Reindeer Run fundraiser has a long history. It began more than a dozen years ago at a fun run hosted by the Ontario Recreation Department as a way to help raise money for the Ontario High school track team buy new uniforms. During the years, it has grown and evolved.

The first year of the race attracted 35 students, and it was conducted at the high school. It has grown so large that it had to be moved to the Citizens Business Bank Arena. Today, it has become more of a community event. Last year, more than 1,200 participants were involved. Even more are expected this year, according to Christina Munoz, recreation and community services spokeswoman.

And this year, for the second year in a row, the beneficiary is the Promise Scholars, a collaborative effort involving Ontario/Montclair School District students. The award-winning program lets families and students know that higher education is possible. The idea is to start getting the message across early and assuring the families that the program will help set the young people on a journey towards a college education.

"This year's Ontario 5-K Reindeer Run and Rudolph's Dash will once again bring together our residents and members of the business community in support of the Promise Scholars Program. Our commitment to the Promise Scholars Program will ensure that our children have access to higher education opportunities and ultimately create an educated and prosperous workforce in the city of Ontario," said Mayor Paul Leon.

Promise Scholars is supported throughout the community by individuals, educators, businesses and higher learning institutions.

"It is an organization that we believe in. Our City Council has placed a high priority on preparing future generations of Ontario residents for success in the workforce. The city's participation in the Promise Scholars program is one example of this partnership. When you invest in your youth, it is an investment for the entire community. All children, regardless of their economic make-up, deserve a chance for a higher education. Promise Scholar's helps them to do just that," Munoz said.

"I think a great part of the success of the race has to do with community value. It is a united effort by all of us, striving to reach the same goal -- an opportunity for kids in our neighborhood to graduate and go on to college. I would also attribute the success of the event to the relationships that have developed over the years with the school districts, business owners and the community."

The 5K Reindeer Run will begin and end at the Citizens Business Bank Arena. The route continues throughout the city near the Ontario Mills Mall. A pancake breakfast, donated by Andy's Burgers in Ontario, will be available for \$3 starting at 8:30 a.m. Members of the Ontario Police and Fire departments will be making breakfasts.

There are many ways in which the community can become involved. Participation being a key one, but volunteers also are needed as are in-kind donations as well. Donations of cases of water, fruit and healthy snacks for the runners would be appreciated. After the event, everyone is encouraged to stay and enjoy the many activities set up at the race's finish line. There will be exercise fun and craft booths, as well as opportunities to catch Santa's ear by visiting with him before the holiday rush hits.

Race registration and check-in begins at 7 a.m. with Rudolph's Dash at 8 a.m. followed by the 5-kilometer run at 8:30 a.m. The cost is \$35 through Friday with the price increasing after that to \$40. The cost of the Rudolph Dash fun run is \$5. Participants also are asked to bring an unwrapped gift for a local child in need. All gifts are appreciated, but ones for older children and teens are especially sought. For more information, call 909-395-2020.

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