

Cones for a cause

Ben & Jerry's dispensed free ice cream cones on Tuesday to help raise money for charity

BY EVA SYLWESTER
NEWS REPORTER

Eugene Ben & Jerry's scoop shops distributed free ice cream to students and community members Tuesday as they do every April 19 for "Free Cone Day," the chain's annual customer appreciation event. In addition to providing cold refreshment on a warm spring day, the event also funds various charity efforts.

The two Eugene scoop shops, at 1239 Alder St. and 485 Coburg Rd., served a combined total of 14,200 ice cream cones Tuesday. Junior general science major Annie Rexford said she could tell it was Free Cone Day because of "the abnormal amount of ice cream cones walking down the street" as students returned to campus after getting ice cream at the Alder Street shop.

Gary Bertelsen, who owns both Ben & Jerry's franchises in Eugene, said the Eugene shops' practice of collecting donations for charity during the event is in its fifth year, with a different charity each year. The first recipient was Children's Miracle Network.

"We knew if we were going to see 8,000 people, we could help raise money for charity," Bertelsen said.

Bertelsen estimated that about three-fourths of all Ben & Jerry's shops use Free Cone Day to help some kind of non-profit agency.

This year the shops chose to help Relay For Life, which raises money for the American Cancer Society. Volunteers from the organization stood outside the scoop shops, collecting money from people who waited in line for free ice cream. Those who donated received "buy one, get one free" coupons they will be able to redeem on future Ben & Jerry's visits.

"They're really donating the ice cream today, giving it away, in exchange for us being able to solicit donations," said American Cancer Society volunteer Richard Sherman, a survivor of pancreatic cancer.

"Some people just come for the free ice cream; some people actually donate," Sherman said.

"I've got to say, I gave them only a quarter," senior political science and economics major Alex Tinker said after getting his ice cream cone at the Alder Street shop. "I mostly did it for the coupon."

"I think it's a fantastic way to raise money because fundraising is already really tough," Rexford said. "It's a good charity, too."

Relay For Life is a national event in which teams of people camp out at a local high school,



Richard Sherman collects donations for Relay For Life, an annual benefit for the American Cancer Society.

park or fairground and take turns running around a track or path for up to 24 hours, raising money for the American Cancer Society by collecting pledges. American Cancer Society volunteer Jay Gano said there are about half a dozen Relay For Life events in Oregon. The local version of the event will be run from 12 p.m. on July 29 to 12 p.m. on July 30.

Gano said the Eugene/Springfield Relay For Life hopes to raise \$500,000 this year, up from \$65,000 just nine or ten years ago.

Gano said he started volunteering for Relay For Life shortly after his mother died of cancer in 1989. His involvement with the charity may have saved his life. At a previous Relay For Life event, he learned that men over 50 need to be tested for prostate cancer, so he insisted on a prostate cancer check at a subsequent doctor visit. He found out exactly a year ago that even though he showed no symptoms, he had prostate cancer.

"I had surgery and I'm fine," he said. "So far I'm cancer-free."

Besides donating money, some people aid charity on Free Cone Day by volunteering their time to scoop ice cream for the massive crowds. Bertelsen said the staff increased today from 16 employees between the two Eugene franchises to 40. He added that it's mandatory for all employees to work on Free Cone Day to help show the volunteers around.

Sophomore business major Lauren Skansgaard said she and a friend were recruited to volunteer for Free Cone Day while eating ice cream at Ben & Jerry's last week.

"I'm so dirty right now, but it's worth it, helping out a good cause," Skansgaard said, describing her ice cream-speckled arms at the end of her volunteer shift.

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Left to right: Ben & Jerry's employee Jules Woodward and volunteers Mallory Mahony and Nicole Golf scooped ice cream Tuesday afternoon for Free Cone Day.



Both Ben & Jerry's locations in Eugene served up a total of 14,200 cones.



Senior business administration major Blake Wehling chooses chocolate chip cookie dough ice cream at Ben & Jerry's Free Cone Day.



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