

# Fewer T-Shirts, More Action

Sports events create a commemorative glut

I believe in teaching my daughter about civic responsibility. We have been volunteering together for five years. She has recently expressed an interest in track and field, so I registered her for a one mile fundraiser race that took place early Mother's Day. The registration form for the Rerun Run stated participants would receive a "mystery shirt" if they chose to pay the additional \$5. Also, an awards ceremony would take place after the race.



Jessica Williams (left) and Emily Mogstad

Upon arrival at the event, my daughter, Emily Mogstad, and her friend Jessica Williams, both 10, were given T-shirts commemorating a Blue Cross-sponsored 2006 Philadelphia 10 Mile Broad Street Run. At the completion of their one mile race they were awarded a First Place ribbon in the 2007 Pints to Pasta 10K race and a medal commemorating the 2007 Hippie Chick Half Marathon. Huh? Oh wait, I did mention the event was titled the "Rerun Run." And in Eugene, that probably means re-use and/or recycle. Okay, now I get it.

## I was shocked to see how much material is wasted for running events that last a couple hours to a day at most.

Funny thing, this race, a fundraiser for The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. I was not expecting Emily to receive any type of award, and I didn't even care if she received the T-shirt. She did, however receive a nice, reusable water bottle, a bonus for a recycler's peace of mind. The other items, it turns out, were collected from races gone by, with the help of a popular running magazine, to add an element of fun to their very serious cause. And it worked. Everyone who participated was pleasantly surprised to receive his or her unique awards.

On a more serious note, I was shocked to see how much material is wasted for running events that last a couple hours to a day at most. I recall our recent Eugene Marathon, and note that because I volunteered to direct traffic, I now own a tie-dye green and yellow T-shirt, which I will wear again, not publicly, but for yard work or house painting. And, because Emily participated in the Kids' Fun Run, she now owns a running shirt and a reusable grocery bag proudly displaying the Eugene Marathon logo and all its sponsors.

I'm not opposed to being a walking billboard or bragging about my daughter's accomplishments as a sports enthusiast and a civic-minded human being, and I realize the value of a memento and the boost to the local economy that this type of event generates. But I see a lot of excess and waste created by offering free items to volunteers and participants. Why not apply that energy and money into managing the event to the best of their ability, as well as creating public awareness for the sport and/or organization's cause? It's not just the running events that create this type of waste. I am flabbergasted at the number of T-shirts my daughter has collected since joining KidSports programs as well as the summer and specialized sports camps she attends throughout the year. I wonder why the kids can't return the shirts for redistribution. Think of the possibilities: The money can be better utilized for something important, like program development and payroll for qualified individuals.

I stumbled upon a website that listed 31 Lane County running events scheduled to take place before the end of this year, some fundraisers, others physical challenges. Participants can look forward to 31 registration forms to complete; 31 T-shirts; 31 water bottles; 31 medals or ribbons; 31 goodie bags of free stuff from race sponsors. And think about all those free shirts and goodie bags for volunteers. As an organizer, if the event you are organizing doesn't draw the crowd you were hoping for, and you end up with excess commemorative materials, don't send them to the landfill. I'm sure the organizers of next year's Rerun Run for The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society will value these cast-offs like they are buried treasure.

*Kathryn Mogstad has resided in Eugene since 1994 and has volunteered and/or worked for numerous nonprofit organizations in this community, most notably as a dog rescuer for Greenhill Humane Society. She is not a spokesperson for, or connected in any way to, the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society.*

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