

Jolly Jogging Jumpers!

Raid your closets for Oregon's Ugliest Sweater Run BY SILAS VALENTINO

An ugly holiday sweater is like egg nog and Macaulay Culkin — once a year they reappear and are enjoyed. 'Tis the season, Marge! We only get 30 sweet noggy days. Then the government takes it away again," Homer Simpson once pined, and few can match Homer's lust for the holiday spirit(s). Except perhaps for one Derek Zinser, the man behind the inaugural Oregon's Ugliest Sweater Run 5K on Dec. 15.

Zinser has created multiple races in Eugene including the '80s-themed Rad Run 5K, Dirty Duck 5K and the Mascots for a Cure (part of Relay for Life), which brought together 161 unique mascots in one location, just six shy of the world record. "I'm a huge Christmas dork," Zinser says. "I love the '80s, I love my Ducks and now this one."

Oregon's Ugliest Sweater Run's mission is aimed at supplying two of the largest tinder for the holiday season's yule log: It's a

family event and a way to give back to the community. The race is sponsored by various local businesses, and proceeds go to FOOD For Lane County, Toys for Tots and the Foster & Adoptive Parent Association of Lane County. Runners can bring food and toys to donate, but Zinser is banking on the \$5 parking fee. "I'm hoping people can bring \$5 because you can do more with \$5 than the food," he says. "My favorite part about these events is that it creates wins for everybody."

The ugly holiday sweater has become an ironic gag these past few seasons (thank you, hipsters) but they can still warm the heart both literally and figuratively. "The sweater I have ... jeez," Zinser says. "It has ribbons, stockings and Christmas lights that light up."

The running event is geared toward creating the most fun, so if your idea of Track Town is a pizza lunch buffet, have no fear, you can still enjoy the race. The 3.1-mile run will be split up every quarter mile into twelve different sections aligning

with one of the holiday's classic odes.

"We want to do something fun so what's better than the 'Twelve Days of Christmas'?" Zinser says. From 11 Eugenean firefighters bagpiping to three grilled hens, the race will offer something festive and exciting around each corner, so chin up, Scrooge. If walking is more your bag, you won't be alone. Even the race officials understand how tough running can be. "No, I actually don't like to run," Zinser says. "I hate running, but I like setting up running events."

So dust off that sweater you own that would most likely make a BuzzFeed list, grab a group of friends, bear the cold and head on down to the park for a day of festivities, community and holiday cheer. If you're parched after the race, put on your best Homer face and join the "Celebrity Egg nog Chugging Contest" at noon at the 5th Street Public Market. ■

Oregon's Ugliest Sweater Run starts rain or shine at 10 am Sunday, Dec. 15, at Alton Baker Park. For more information visit oregonsugliestsweaterun.com.



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