

Santa Run: Bringing community together to support those in recovery



The Santa Run, an annual race held in Bismarck each December, was started to raise awareness of addiction issues in the community and to raise funds for the Runners Against Destructive Decisions (RADD) group.

Started in April 2014 by Judge David Reich, RADD provides a healthy lifestyle alternative for individuals in recovery and their families. "In an effort to stop the cycle of addiction, crime, and jail, I decided to start a running group," he says. "RADD meets weekly to run or walk. Participants set a goal of completing a 5k run or walk and train with RADD for approximately eight weeks before doing so."

RADD also buys running shoes and pays race entry fees for participants who could not otherwise afford those costs.

The first Santa Run was held in December

2014. "We were hoping for 100-150 participants for the first run and far exceeded our expectations with more than 350," says Reich, adding, in 2017, more than 400 individuals took part in the race.

He says the event is unique for many reasons. "There are not many running events in North Dakota in December. Everyone 13 and older runs in a Santa suit and sponsors run in elf costumes. Carolers, spectators, and inflatables line the race course, and more than 100 volunteers contribute to the festive spirit of the event."

The Santa Run is also unique because its purpose is to raise awareness of addiction issues in the community. "The subject of addiction is usually portrayed in a very serious and often negative light," notes Reich. "The Santa Run is a fun and festive event which provides hope and support for individuals in recovery and celebrates their sobriety."

In addition to raising funds for RADD, proceeds from the event are shared with the group's charity partner, Hope Manor sober living homes, and the Burleigh County Drug Court. Hope Manor operates three sober living homes in Bismarck to provide a safe drug and alcohol-free environment for individuals newly in recovery, and Drug Court provides an alternative to incarceration for individuals convicted of drug and/or alcohol-related crime. "The Santa Run helps to raise awareness of the issues of addiction in a positive way and helps build community and support for individuals in recovery," says Reich.

For more information on RADD and the Santa Run, visit www.bismarcksantarun.com. Individuals interested in volunteering with RADD can contact Reich at dreich@ndcourts.gov or meet at the east lobby of the Bismarck YMCA at 7 a.m. on Saturday mornings.



Above, Judge Reich at the Santa Run.



Right, the many Santa Run participants.