

The Bismarck Tribune

RADD

Judge starts running program as positive alternative to bad decisions

JUNE 30, 2014 6:00 AM • BY [ALLYSON KRUPINSKY](#)

Time after time, South Central District Judge David Reich sees many of the same people come back to Drug Court.

In order to break the cycle of addiction, he believes it's necessary to invest time in healthy alternatives.

This April, Reich started RADD, "Runners Against Destructive Decisions."

Reich has seen groups with similar goals and methods be successful in other places, so he decided to bring the mission to Bismarck.

"We're hoping this makes them stronger physically, emotionally and mentally to help them deal with their addiction issues," Reich said.

RADD meets at 6:30 a.m. every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at Shelter No. 7 in Sertoma Park. If people can't drive, Reich encourages coming with a friend or family member.

Although RADD is fairly new, Reich would eventually like to have a more organized program. He wants participants to work toward a 5K through an eight-week program.

Running ability has nothing to do with joining RADD, Reich said. Creating healthy habits, making personal commitments and meeting new people is what matters, not performance.

"Running is something that you can do with a group and it's good to get the support from other runners, but really it's an individual sport and you're running more against yourself or setting goals for yourself," Reich said. "And that's really how you should measure yourself; you'll get out of this what you put into it. Runners come in all sizes and shapes and ages and gender — it doesn't matter. When we get together we're just runners."

Joining RADD doesn't require any talking, either. Volunteers are there to listen, but they don't push it. Runners can choose if they want to share anything personal.

"Once you invest some time and do it on a regular basis it becomes a habit like anything else and a part of your schedule," Reich said. "And once you do that, it's kind of an informal support group."

Most Saturdays, Reich brings breakfast for everyone after their run. As the group gets bigger, he'd like to bring in speakers to talk about running equipment and other informative, healthy topics.

If anyone needs a good pair of running shoes, RADD will purchase them once they've shown commitment to the program. The registration fees for any 5K race they plan to participate in will be taken care of as well. Other than that, costs for RADD will be minimal.

"It's not going to be an expensive program," Reich said.

Reich is hoping to involve a younger crowd as well. He's working with people in the juvenile court system to overcome confidentiality and liability restrictions.

So far, a typical run consists of about six people. There are a few regulars already, and Reich is seeing progress.

"I think they enjoy it; I think they're excited about it. I think they like the thought that they have some activity to go to," Reich said. "People want to be recognized and appreciated, and I think that this is a program that is set up for them. There are a lot of benefits not only to the individual, I think, but to the community to have a program like this up and running and be successful."

Hope Manor founder Judith Roberts takes two of the 11 women living in the first sober house in North Dakota to run with RADD every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

Roberts is on the RADD Steering Committee to help organize, plan and get the word out.

Roberts and the two women who come with her say they have great days after they're done running.

"I think it is such an opportunity to start the day in a positive manner," Roberts said. "(It) also gives some really good bonding time and makes you feel healthy."

Tim Sass, a member of the RADD Steering Committee, said the best thing about RADD is its ability to bring together different members of the community with people wanting to better themselves. He admires the professionals who are going beyond the responsibilities of their job to take time and make connections.

"I think it's a phenomenal idea," Sass said. "It's a great opportunity for all of us."

Reich wants RADD to have an event of its own. He thinks it will not only give its runners something to work toward, but also let the community know what they're doing.

"Part of what we're doing is to help people in recovery and to bring awareness to the community about addiction issues in our community," Reich said. "That's why we thought it would be beneficial to our program to have some visibility and have something a little different, have kind of a visual type of race. So that's why we decided on a Santa Run."

In a Santa Run, every runner wears a Santa suit. Reich has been a part of a few in Minnesota, and he's looking forward to bringing the event to Bismarck.

Not all the details have been finalized yet, but their Santa Run is set to take place Dec. 13. Anyone who wants to participate is welcome.

At this point, RADD's biggest obstacle is recruiting people to meet on a weekly basis.

"Anybody can run. We're always looking for volunteers to help with runners and we're looking for anyone that's in recovery from addiction that wants to join us," Reich said.

In five years, Sass would like to see RADD spread throughout North Dakota. He hopes that eventually they'll have the support of hundreds.

Roberts wants to see more people participating in RADD in the near future.

"It would be nice if it would grow, if there would be more people that participated, because the more support and enthusiasm you have, it's easier to get up in the morning," Roberts said. "If there's a lot of people there then you don't want to miss out on it."

So far, Reich has experienced great support from the community, but it hasn't reflected in the number of the runners yet.

"I'm hoping that it's an idea that will grow, that will continue to grow and have the steady core group of volunteers that will do it and that it will become a regular running group here," Reich said.

"I think there's a need for it," he added. "It's one of those things that you have to hope people will see the benefit in it."