

Groups can raise funds through Fox Valley Marathon program

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Updated: Monday, Feb. 27, 2017 2:32 p.m. CST



Fox Valley Marathon co-race directors Dave Sheble and Craig Bixler envisioned something before it ultimately transpired, which makes them like thousands of runners.

That the St. Charles duo's latest act potentially benefits thousands of people who aren't competing in the Sept. 17 race undoubtedly sets them apart.

Sheble and Bixler have expanded the second-year group fundraising program at the marathon and its affiliated events, growing from 14 opportunities in 2016 to 44 this coming fall. Groups of two to 12 people need only volunteer for three to eight hours, and marathon officials will donate \$200 to \$1,050 to the group's favorite 501(c)3 charity. The donation is proportionate to the time and number of volunteers needed, and the marathon will give up to \$20,000 to various organizations in 2017.

Volunteer tasks include race village construction and teardown, course operations, aid station support and race medal distribution.

"They're helping runners get across the finish line and meet their goals, but they're also helping their favorite cause at the same time and having fun doing it," Sheble said. "Just another layer in our benefit to the community and benefit to the charities package that we're trying to continue to build on."

During the course of a recent phone conversation, Sheble happily applied the phrase "everybody wins" to the group fundraising program several times.

Video Globe-spanning World Marathon Challenge

Those words weren't far from the lips of 2016 participants, either.

Julie Eggleston, director of the Kishwaukee Special Recreation Association in DeKalb, beamed about the work her organization did with a group of Northern Illinois University students at the 2016 marathon for KSRA and its Camp Maple Leaf summer program.

"The volunteers reported that they loved the 'giving back' feeling they were able to do," Eggleston said. "The most rewarding experience for KSRA was to build a new collaboration with these partners and be able to have enough scholarship monies to support two campers for the 2017 season of Camp Maple Leaf."

Representatives from Living Word Christian Center in Forest Park shared a similar sentiment about the program and race officials.

"Hands down, they do a fantastic job," Living Word information technology director Sharon Stewart said. "It's a great experience. The race is well-run; the people who manage the charity part of it are very good. Everything about it is so good."

The marathon, which includes a 20-mile run, half-marathon and kids marathon, will hold its eighth annual running in September. The event has grown markedly in size and scope since its 2010 debut in downtown St. Charles. Affiliated marathons or half marathons – and corresponding volunteer fundraising opportunities – are set for April 22 and 23 and Sept. 9, as well.

For a full list of opportunities, visit www.fv26.com/2015-jon-us/2016-volunteers.

“What’s worth doing is worth doing for yourself and for others, and we’ve really worked hard to build a charity program at the base level, and that was great,” Sheble said. “And then we added a second layer, which was a group charity program.

“We sat back and said, ‘There’s a lot of groups out fundraising for their causes that have to go through the exercise of finding the right fundraising event, creating it, managing it, publicizing it, etc., to raise money for their endeavors.’ And we thought this is a good match.”