

Making sure Heart Run remains healthy

Photos

Photos



NICOLE L. CVETNIC / *Observer-Dispatch*

Volunteers Mary Ellen Carhart, left, and Kacey Schug place tablecloths over several tables in the Harold T. Clark Jr. Athletic Center in preparation for the annual America's Greatest Heart Run & Walk Expo, Thursday, March 6, 2008 in Utica.

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By COURTNEY POTTS

Observer-Dispatch

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UTICA —

Thousands of people are expected to participate in the American Heart Association's America's Greatest Heart Run & Walk on Saturday, potentially raising more than \$1 million for heart research and education.

Some of the local events raising money for heart research or surrounding the run and walk, however, are not completely heart-healthy in terms of the food they serve.

When Rebecca Alford of Ilion and her teammates wanted to raise money for the American Heart Association, they decided to have a fundraiser at the Mohawk American Legion. The main event was a performance by Alford's band, but there was also a dinner buffet featuring food donated by about 40 generous volunteers focused on providing an appetizing spread.

Tofu? No. Italian sausage? Yes.

"Dietary stuff wasn't thought about," said Alford, herself a heart disease survivor who's had three surgeries.

That event is hardly alone. Mary Kate Hartmann, communications director for the American Heart Association Syracuse Metro Region, said she's aware some fundraisers for heart research might not fully reflect the dietary guidelines the organization promotes.

She stressed, however, these fundraisers are organized by third parties who are not directly affiliated with the Heart Association. She said her organization is happy to have their participation regardless.

"We appreciate all that our teams do to raise funds ... (and) we certainly want to encourage the community to support the teams," Hartmann said.

She suggested future fundraisers could adopt more health-conscious options, such as organizing a company-wide challenge that promotes exercise, or hosting a lunch with menu items such as salad with low-fat dressing.

The Heart Association also publishes heart-healthy cookbooks that can be used for fundraisers, she said.

Dave Hadasz, owner of The Venue bar in Yorkville, is hosting a post-race party Saturday for more than 200 people. The free buffet will include healthy items such as crackers, cheese and fruit, but customers also will be able to purchase classic "basic bar food" such as chicken wings and mozzarella sticks, he said.

According to Calorie-Count.com, just one mozzarella stick can contain 10 percent of the recommended daily value of saturated fat.

Hadasz said the fact his establishment is a bar should not stop him from contributing to the community.

"Our goal is not to serve unhealthy food," he said. "Our goal is to raise money for the American Heart Association."

Dick Mattia, executive director of the American Heart Association Central Region, said the association is working to provide more healthy options at its own post-race celebration at the Utica College gym.

Aramark, a vendor under contract with Utica College, has agreed to make all food at the event heart-healthy, Mattia said. For example, if nachos are served, they will be made with low-fat cheese, he explained.

In the end, Mattia said, it's up to individuals to choose what they will or will not eat.

"We can educate, and we can tell people what we need to do ... but we can't control when people make that decision," he said. "We hope they make an intelligent choice."

For information on heart-healthy food choices, visit the American Heart Association's Web site at www.americanheart.org.

The original article that was changed after 45 minutes of my husband and I screaming at the editor Thursday night

By COURTNEY POTTS

Observer-Dispatch

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UTICA —

When Rebecca Alford of Ilion and her teammates wanted to raise money for the America's Greatest Heart Run & Walk, they decided to have a fundraiser at the Mohawk American Legion.

The main event was a performance by Alford's band, but there was also a dinner buffet featuring ziti and Italian sausage.

Alford, herself a heart disease survivor, left most of the menu planning to caterers.

"Dietary stuff wasn't thought about," she said.

Thousands of people are expected to participate in the American Heart Association's walk Saturday, potentially raising more than \$1 million for heart-health research and education.

Some of the events surrounding the walk, however, are not completely heart-healthy.

Over the years, people have raised money through dinners such as Alford's, or by selling donuts or bagels

laden with cream cheese.

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Mary Kate Hartmann, communications director for the American Heart Association Syracuse Metro Region, said she’s aware some fundraisers for the annual event may not fully reflect the dietary guidelines the organization promotes.

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