

First Reindeer Run proves success in raising money for Promise Scholars program

Liset Márquez, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin



The city of Ontario recently held the Reindeer Run benefiting the Promise Scholars program in OMSD. There were about 1,200 runners and walkers. The event raised about \$20,000 for the program. (Courtesy photo)

More than 1,200 runners and walkers enjoyed a sunny Saturday morning Dec. 8 at the first 5K Reindeer Run and 1K Rudolph Dash in Ontario benefiting the Promise Scholars program.

Held at Citizens Business Bank Arena, the race was coordinated by the city of Ontario and included more than 300 spectators there to cheer on the run participants, said Leslie Sorensen

"We were so pleased, it was a clear sunny warm day," she recalled.

This year's event in partnership with Ontario-Montclair School District, resulted in a four-fold increase in participants and raised more than \$20,000 for Promise Scholars between the race and the Kia Soul raffle, she said.

In the last week and a half, Sorensen said the city got an avalanche of registrants, and it was then they knew it was going to be a success.

To help out, Sorensen said they did tons of outreach to the schools, even having a reindeer character come out to visit. As a result, about 500 registrants came from the school sites. Sorensen she believes there may have been even more.

Because transportation can be difficult for some families, five school buses were made available for families. Sorensen said she even heard that a mother and daughter took public transportation to get there.

"Walking, running whatever it is, I think what was really nice was there were families together. People brought their dogs. Just a lot of families together," Sorensen said.

Holiday costumes and dressed-up dogs made the family-oriented event a success, she added the Kia Soul donated by Allstar Kia of Pomona and San Bernardino was won by retired OMSD teacher Linda Mes.

Ramona School won a \$1,000 prize from the Ontario-Montclair Schools Foundation for the most race participants, Wiltsey School won for the largest team, Vina Danks School won for "most team spirit" and the Superintendents' Team won "fastest team."

Sorensen said she is grateful to have all the schools participate.

This year, the city partnered with the OMSD and the Promise Scholars Foundation.

Promise Scholars is a non-profit organization focused on bringing the community and businesses together in support of college and career readiness for OMSD students. Promise Scholars seeks to ensure a place in college for all OMSD students through partnerships with Chaffey Joint Union High School District, Chaffey College and Cal State San Bernardino along with local organizations, businesses and community members.

All OMSD students who complete the Promise Scholars preparatory requirements will be provided access and admission to a partner college -- which is why this fundraiser was critical for the program.

Money from this event will help fund some of the programming held throughout the year as part of Promise Scholars. It also helped raise money for scholarships, the first cohort of the program will graduate in 2016.

But the race also had another benefit -- it encourages youth and people in the community to be health-conscious, Sorensen said.

"I had a wonderful experience. I could see the smile on people's faces," she said.

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