

## Pennsylvania Parks & Forests Foundation Fact Sheet for Friends Groups—5k Run/Walk

From serious athletes to casual strollers, a 5k run/walk (or something longer) is a great way to bring a variety of people to the park/forest for a day out. The basis for the checklist is lessons learned from PPF's own Lace Up for Leah 5k held in two consecutive years at Samuel Lewis State Park. The Friends of Nolde Forest host their Run for the Ages; the Friends of Cowans Gap presented a 5k as their very first event and the Friends of Pine Grove Furnace bring hordes to the park for their annual Iron Run Half Marathon and Charcoal Challenge 5k in June.

Be prepared with lots of volunteers and plenty of hope for good weather—these are nearly essential for a successful run/walk. Be prepared as well for lots of happy faces when your event is well-organized.

### PRE-EVENT DECISIONS

- Determine a date and make your decision **well** in advance. Many runners plan their race schedule months ahead so get on the calendar early. The Friends of Pine Grove Furnace (FOPGF) begin to receive inquiries in January for their June event!
- Ask key questions:
  - How many participants do you anticipate?
  - Where will everyone park?
  - Are there crowd control/traffic control needs?
  - Will this be a competitive, sanctioned race or a fun run/walk? If competitive, what permits do you need? What other qualifications must your event meet?
  - Will you handle event day logistics internally or hire a race timing consultant?  
Say the FOPGF, "Racers these days expect detailed timing during the event, and a full list later (on your website) with sorted results. If you advertise your event only as a 'fun run to

support the park,' that's one thing, but if you are putting on a real race and want to make real money, a modern digital timer crew and their equipment is necessary (and can eliminate a lot of the set-up/logistics for you). Try to find someone who will do it as a charity/volunteer donation to your group: if you have to pay 'normal' rates for this type of service, it will be prohibitively expensive.

At Pine Grove Furnace, we developed a connection to the local high school track coach. He brings his expensive equipment and a couple people, sets up/breaks down without our help, and coordinates racer 'bib' numbers and electronic chips. During the race the timer crew keeps track of all finishers then immediately prints out a result sheet on the spot so we can hold a post-race awards ceremony very easily. We pay a 'donation' to them of \$500, plus around a dollar per racer to cover the costs of the electronic chips. That's very cheap, really!

Racer bibs with consecutive numbers can be obtained FREE for example at [www.RoadID.com](http://www.RoadID.com). All you pay is their mailing costs."



Even on a cold day, volunteers' smiles will keep you warm!  
Photo: Friends of Cowans Gap

- What is the event cancellation policy? (Reschedule or refund?)
- Will there be food? If so, who will provide?
- Will you provide water stops along the course?
- Choose a location. Be sure you have:
  - A place for a medical tent
  - Plenty of water before and after event
  - A location for an awards ceremony
  - Restrooms
- Get the necessary permits

- Park/Forest
- Township/City (if leaving park/forest boundaries)
- Map out the exact route
- Limit the number of intersections. Watch for areas that could cause confusion.
- Will you need police for the route? Cost?
- Determine a budget
  - Insurance (contact PPF for a rider to existing policy – usually \$50)
  - Parking/traffic control
  - Police presence
  - Timing/scoring contractor
  - Refreshments
  - Shirts or other participant premium
  - Signage
  - Awards
  - What will you charge to meet the budget AND raise some money, too? Plan for early registration price and a higher price later to encourage pre-registration. FOPGF start with \$25 for the 5k and \$35 for the half marathon, with prices increasing by \$10 for each race about three weeks before. The type of race will also effect the price you'll charge. Stay competitive with like events!
- Create volunteer committees to assume pre-event planning and day-of responsibilities
  - Organizing Committee (Overall, last-line-of-defense for the event)
  - Event Operations (Make day-of go smoothly, will work with race consultant if applicable)
  - First Aid
  - Fundraising (Recruitment, care and feeding of donors and sponsors)
  - Publicity/Marketing (Getting the word out)
  - Refreshments (Food and water for participants and spectators)
  - Registration (Pre-event and day-of registration tasks)

## **ORGANIZING**

### **Pre-Event Responsibilities**

- Recruit a Race Director. You need someone formally in charge, especially on race day.
- Make committee assignments
- Coordinate ordering
  - Brochures
  - Finish tape with sponsor's name(s)
  - Participant awards/medals
  - Participant premiums (t-shirts, water bottles)

- Race official and volunteer shirts
- Refreshments
- Signage

### **Day of Event Responsibilities**

- Assist committees with tasks

### **Post-Event Responsibilities**

- Volunteer/Officials' party
- Evaluation meeting with all committees



Go!

Photo: Friends of Nolde Forest

- Follow-up with participants and volunteers
- Send out report on how money was used
- Promote next year's race

## **EVENT OPERATIONS**

### **Pre-Event Responsibilities**

- Arrange for tents (awards, refreshment, registration) in the event of inclement weather
- Invite awards ceremony host; script if necessary
- Determine/arrange AV needs
- Prepare course information signs/course map for participants. A well-marked/signed course is CRUCIAL for the success of the event so recruit someone who has either marked a race before or is a runner him or herself
  - Start/finish line
  - Mile markers
  - Aid stations and medical information
  - Location of restrooms
  - Weather information
- Prepare instructional briefings for
  - Participants
  - Course security/marshals
  - Awards host
  - Sponsors
  - Media

### **Day of Event Responsibilities**

- Course material in place:
  - Mile/kilometer markers, arrows, refreshment/water stations, communication equipment
  - Start/finish line equipment
  - Chute materials (stanchions/rope)
  - Digital clock
  - Computer system
  - Recording sheets, clipboards, pencils for timer, bib number recorders
  - Clothing/check-in/changing facilities/showers (optional)
  - Pace/seeding signs (optional for large races)
- Brief:
  - Course security/marshals/communications
  - Course officials
  - Official photographer (provided with shot-list)
  - Course vehicle drivers (someone familiar w/ course should guide each vehicle)
  - Sweep vehicle driver
  - Official starter
- PA system or bullhorns functioning

### **Set-Up for Results Area:**

- Isolated area close to finish line
- Tables and chairs
- Electric power hook-up
- Pre-printed awards with age groups, teams and special division
- Bulletin board with tacks, tie wraps, scotch tape
- Results posting and distribution

### **Set-Up for Awards Area:**

- Tables and chairs
- Podium or announcing stand
- PA system
- Awards display area
- Results posting area

### **Post-Event Responsibilities**

- Clean-up (course, start/finish area, locker rooms)

### **FIRST AID**

#### **Pre-Event Responsibilities**

- Arrange for appropriate personnel (local ambulance)

#### **Day of Event Responsibilities**

- Set up medical area

#### **Post-Event Responsibilities**

- Clean-up

### **FUNDRAISING**

#### **Pre-Event Responsibilities**

- Gather list of potential donors
- Recruit sponsors (money, prizes, food)
- Set-up place and time for sponsors to drop off tschotskes to include in participant bags
- Gather volunteers and have bag-filling get together

#### **Day of Event Responsibilities**

- Provide assistance!

#### **Post-Event Responsibilities**

- Clean-up

### **PUBLICITY/MARKETING**

#### **Pre-Event Responsibilities**

- Confirm name for event
- Create and approve a logo
- Work with Registration Committee to create website to allow people to register online
- Create the "why" - contact people who have or will benefit from fundraising and tell their story
- Design volunteer and participant T-shirts; provide to Organizing Committee to order.
- Flickr, Facebook and YouTube
- Promotion Opportunities
  - Distribution of entries through direct mailing, at running stores, health clubs, other races
  - Posters/flyers
  - Press announcements and advertisement (calendar listings in local newspapers)
  - Regional and national running magazines
  - Television/radio public service announcements
  - Press releases
  - Neighborhood flyer to advertise and notify any inconvenience to residents
- Find a volunteer photographer or videographer

#### **Day of Event Responsibilities**

- Sponsor banners and signs placed where easily seen by participants and press

#### **Post-Event Responsibilities**

- Press release with results/photos
- Post race mailing or email to participants
- Thank you letters to sponsors, volunteers, contributors, municipalities
- Clean-up

### **REGISTRATION**

#### **Pre-Event Responsibilities**

- Determine how participants will register. FOPGF

strongly recommend encouraging online registration. There are many benefits to using an online system: (a) ability to email all racers, (b) get race shirt sizes for pre-ordering (if relevant), and (c) download and sort data in a spreadsheet before and after the race. The hassles of registration data management are HUGE and an online service makes it much easier. The FOPGF use and recommend RunReg ([www.runreg.com](http://www.runreg.com)).

- Work with Publicity Committee to develop online registration and/or create brochure and registration form.
- Information to be included in registration materials:
  - Date of race
  - Starting time(s)
  - Start and finish site(s), directions, public transportation, parking
  - Race distance(s)
  - Course description/ map (include terrain, mile markers, elevation)
  - Course certification number (if applicable)
  - Race sanction, insurance
  - Recognition of municipalities, sponsors and contributors
  - Age groups awards with depth in each category
  - Team categories / prizes (spell out team rules, number per team, scoring method)
  - Time/location of awards ceremony (usually 15-30 minutes after last finisher)
  - Amenities (T-shirt with limits, food, etc.)
  - T-shirt/packet pick-up information
  - Entry fee (non-refundable!), entry deadline, checks payable to...
  - Mailing address to send entry with check
  - Race limit, if applicable
  - Refreshments and other amenities
  - Clinics and other related activities
- Information to be solicited from participant:
  - Name Address (street, city, state, zip)
  - Telephone
  - Email
  - Age and date of birth
  - Special categories and team/club designation such as Wheelchair, Clydesdale, Walker or Police



The Friends of Pine Grove Furnace know race day is a lot of work but is a lot of fun, too!  
Photo: Friends of Pine Grove Furnace

- Signature (parent or guardian if under 18)
- Waiver of Liability
- Determine sign-in process and numbering
- Table and chairs for registration
- Alphanumerical lists printed

### **Day of Event Responsibilities**

Set-Up Registration Area for (1) check-in, (2) acceptance of new entrants. Note the FOPGF no longer give "goodie bags" to participants. If someone donates energy bars or chips, they go into a bowl for all the runners.

- At Check-In for Pre-Registered Participants:
  - Packet pick-up
  - Race numbers and pins
  - Hand out timing buttons
  - Post participant lists
- At Registration for New Participants:
  - Entry forms/pens/pencils (use separate table)
  - Participant packets
  - Cash-box/change (plenty of ones and fives)
  - Set up a Trouble Table (if large race)

### **Post-Event Responsibilities**

- Clean-up

## **REFRESHMENTS**

### **Pre-Event Responsibilities**

- Determine food and water needs
- Provide information to Organizing Committee to order
- Make signage for sale items

### **Day of Event Responsibilities**

- Tables
- Cashbox/change (if selling food) (plenty of \$1/\$5)
- Food, water, ice, coffee
- Utensils
- Trash barrels/bags

### **Post-Event Responsibilities**

- Clean-up

### **Friends Group Resources:**

Friends of Cowans Gap—717.263.3702  
 Friends of Nolde Forest—610.233.4595  
 Friends of Pine Grove Furnace—  
[pinegrovefriends@gmail.com](mailto:pinegrovefriends@gmail.com)