

Volunteer Usage At Races

Pretzel City Sports sends a 2-person crew to every race it times, other than real large or complex races that require more. For those races, we may send more people but that is also reflected in a higher fee. We send only 2 people so we can keep our fees low to races; most of which often have plenty of volunteers to assist us anyway.

The PCS crew does all the setup and tear down. That allows your volunteers to do other tasks right before or after the race. We do ask that you send those volunteers over to the start or finish line within 2-3 minutes after the race starts. We'll give them instructions when they get there on how to help. They do such tasks without close supervision. That is why we ask that all volunteers be 18 or older and that none of them have ANOTHER task to do while the race is actually going on, such as getting photos of the finishers or babysitting a young child at the same time that they are helping. All volunteers are expected to remain at the finish line until ALL finishers have finished.

While the race is actually going on, the one PCS member operates the time machine at the finish line that records the order of finish and each person's time. This is an ABSOLUTE; regardless of what crew we send. The other PCS person pulls the tag off the bottom of the bib at the end of the chute. Some crews operate slightly differently than that but ALL crews have one PCS person at the back of the chute.

We ask for 3 volunteers for every race, regardless of size, and 1 or 2 more if your race is larger or more complex. Volunteer 1 will put the tags we pull off the bib onto the results board. Volunteer 2 will help write down the award winners with the help of our PCS person. They will also get the information of any person who gets to the end of the chute without a pull off tag. Volunteer 3 will stand right beside the chute and attempt to keep the people moving toward the end of the chute in the exact same order as they are when they cross the line. This person must keep an eye on the finish line itself and they, with the help of our timer, will determine the official order of finish when 2 runners finish at almost the same time. If there is a large number of people in a short race, we may need a longer chute and then it is essential to have another volunteer along the chute to keep runners moving in the chute and in the correct order. If we are fortunate enough to have a fifth volunteer, we may have them assist our timer in identifying each bib number just before each runner crosses the finish line.

Two More Important Volunteers to Consider

Two more VERY important volunteers are well worth having; one is called a race leader and the other is called a race sweep. BOTH can save you a lot of hassle and a lot of embarrassment. The race leader "leads" the race and stays in front of whichever runner is leading the race. They may do so in a car, bike, motorcycle, golf cart, etc. The MAIN thing is whomever is leading the race KNOWS THE COURSE LIKE THE BACK OF THEIR HAND!! They'll also want to ride within site of the lead runner but not so close that that runner breathes their exhaust. Sometimes, the items that you use to mark where the runners go should get blown away, obscured by parked cars along the way or are removed/changed by some "jokester" who thinks it would be funny to send everyone in the wrong direction, with no consideration to its impact on your charity. 10-15 races we time a year get a black mark on their reputation because all or some of the runners run the wrong course. That fact MEGA-complicates calculating results that everyone feels is fair plus the hard feelings it creates hurts the attendance of that event the next year.

The sweep is more essential to how well the race is organized. The sweep, again in a vehicle, follows the last runner/walker in the race. If that person passes someone, they follow the NEW last person in the race. The sweep allows all your volunteers on the course to know that everyone has gone past and they may leave their spot. The sweep also can quickly call for assistance for anyone who is having trouble finishing the event. The sweep ALSO goes thru the finish line so that the timers know that everyone is off the course and that the event may start their awards ceremony.

Some races that are short on help have a person lead the race and then, when they are done, they go out on the course again until they encounter the last person in the event, at which point they THEN become the sweep.