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ALL AROUND ABRAXAS



Runnin' Down a Dream

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Ask someone to picture a runner and often the image of a superstar speedster such as Usain Bolt comes to mind. Ask someone the benefits of running and perhaps they can provide a list revolving around health and wellness. Ask someone if they would like to go for a run and sometimes you hear a groan of disapproval or receive a quick rejection of the idea. The beauty of a 'race' however is the

reality that it can be completed in many different ways, by individuals with capabilities of many different levels and when measuring the benefits, medals and awards are only a tiny portion of the actual impact.

It is with this final point that the idea of residents of the Abraxas Youth Center Secure Treatment Program participating in a local 5K came to fruition. Every June, the Race Against Poverty 5K in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania is run to benefit Support Circles of Franklin County, which is an organization that assists individuals working to overcome the obstacles of poverty. With a worthy cause established, staff members at Abraxas began to try to identify ways to assist the race organizers, prepare our potential runners and assure the understanding of the real purpose of the race participation could be identified by each youth.

In late March 2018, the 'Cardio Club' was introduced to residents interested in participating in an opportunity to work on their fitness, without any promise of an end goal or external reward announced. About a month later, a reach out was made to the Race Against Poverty organizer with a request to have the residents participate in a potential community service project by helping with something related to race set-up. As the June race date arrived, five youth and six staff members from AYC were prepared for a fun evening with a bit of work, but a more notable mission. To assist with race preparation, the youth placed the signs purchased by sponsors along the race course. Each participant anxiously awaited the race start, but were able to reflect on how their preparation for and participation in an event that helped others in need could feel so good in being a part of.

All residents and staff completed the Race Against Poverty 5K that night with a sense of pride and accomplishment. Most importantly, the youth involved were able to recognize that regardless of ability, pace, or recognition, the true reward was in the message of being able to overcome and assist others in the goal of self-reliance.