

Cupid's Chase 5K benefits nonprofit Community Option

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Posted:

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LAS CRUCES >> Over the course of 4 years, Las Cruces Jimmie Doss lost 175 pounds — something his girlfriend Holly Cannon found inspirational as she began a health regimen of her own.

After recently running in the Biggest Loser Run/Walk, Cannon is looking forward to her next 5K: Cupid's Chase on Feb. 8, which benefits Community Options, a cause close to Cannon's heart.

"I heard about it through Facebook and, since it's for Valentine's Day, I thought it was a cute idea," she said. "So we decided to put a team together, and then I found out that it helps people with disabilities."

Being in her senior year as a special education major at New Mexico State University, Cannon said the cause behind the run is "near and dear" to her heart.

"It's my passion," she said. "It's doing something that benefits me, and people that I care about. That's my motivation. It is getting me healthy and fit, and it's benefiting my passion."

The race, hosted annually since 2009 by Community Options, will be held Feb. 8 at 24 locations across the county.

Locally, it will kick off with registration at 8 a.m. at the Mesilla Plaza. Around 10,000 are expected to participate nationwide, this year, doubling 2013's participation, according to Community Options' website. All proceeds from the race benefit services that support people with disabilities.

The race will kick off at 10 a.m. for walkers, runners and rollers — baby strollers and wheel chairs — as well as spectators who want to show their support.

Participants can expect high energy and healthy happenings when they join the event to "run their heart out," according to Valeria Rincon, part of the Community Options Cupid's Chase committee.

Health vendors will be on hand with tips and tricks on staying healthy; there will be water and high-five stations throughout the nearly 3-mile course, and, new this year, a Zumba instructor will be there before the race to warm up participants.

According to the event's Facebook page, a trophy will be given to the top three overall finishers; a medal will be given to the top three finishers in each gender and age category; and T-shirts, gift bags and even love connections will be part of this Cupid's Chase.

"I ran it for the first time last year. It was a wonderful run. I loved the location," Rincon said. "And all of the money stays here in Las Cruces, and it's for a great agency."

Community Options is a national nonprofit that started in 1989 and provides residential and employment services for people with disabilities. Cupid's Chase is an annual fundraiser for the organization.

Also at this year's race, Rincon said there will be a DJ blasting music for the crowd, and plenty of

encouragement from the sidelines and race stations.

"When you're running these things, and want to give up, but have people telling you that you can do it, you can make it another mile, and then another. That's what they (participants) can expect — a lot of encouragement," she said.

Cannon said she hopes to have fun with Doss and their friends on their team, as well as beat her personal best time for a 5K.

Mark Rojas, owner of 9Round Las Cruces — an event sponsor — said this will be his first Cupid's Chase.

"We are always trying to get involved in the community and give back," he said. "We have a big heart, and when it comes to helping people with disabilities, or fighting cancer, or different organizations that help, we love doing it. It's so satisfying."

Rojas said he and the rest of the 9Round team hope to raise \$500 toward the cause.

To prepare for his first ever 5K, Rojas said he's been running and lifting weights to get prepared.

For more information, contact Community Options at 575-532-9275, or to register online, visit comop.org/cupidschase or Cupid's Chase 5k Run on Facebook.

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