

MUSHING FOR MEALS ENTRIES TOP 300 TO BOOST FUNDING

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Clint Wolf/Beloit Daily News Some runners in the Mushing for Meals event held Saturday were tied together and ran in costume. It was a way to add a little fun to the 5K/10K run, which raised funds for the Meals on Wheels of Beloit.

BELOIT — Some showed up for the Mushing for Meals 5K/10K run in costume, while others were dressed warmly to fend off the rain and cold.

But all turned out to support Meals On Wheels on Saturday during the agency's biggest fundraiser of the year, and while the organization could be facing federal budget cuts.

Meals on Wheels in Beloit delivers meals to 90 people every day. The clients of the agency mostly are elderly residents who can't get out very often and they look forward to the deliveries and the friendly conversation from the volunteer meal delivery people. The Mushing for Meals event has been held for six years in Beloit to raise funds for and awareness about the Beloit Meals On Wheels program.

Ellen Wiegand, executive director of the Beloit agency, said although it was a rainy and cold day Saturday she was very pleased with the turnout.

"It shows dedication and it's all for a good cause. It's wonderful they came out to support us," she said.

She said about 50 volunteers turned out to help make the event a success.

More than 300 runners took part in the event and volunteers said there were more day-of-race registrations than last year, helping to break the record for the event.

Linda Bank, a former board member for Meals On Wheels and one of the volunteers who delivers meals in Beloit, said the funds raised by the event are especially important this year.

"Every little bit helps since the government is talking about cutting funds for Meals On Wheels," she said.

Race coordinator Jeff Johnson said the race draws serious runners and not-so-serious runners. He said, to make the run a little more fun, awards are given to teams of three who are in costume. The teams of three run while tied together and at the end of the race awards are given for best costume. On Saturday there were people dressed as the Mario Brothers from the old video game, and as Minions from the Despicable Me movies.

Also adding a bit of fun to the event was the Free Spirit Sled Demo Team — a sled dog team which led runners at the start of the race.

Jason Hussong of Free Spirit Siberian Husky Rescue based in Harvard, Illinois, has been coming to the Mushing for Meals event since it started six years ago. His organization rescues Huskies and Husky mixed breed dogs and finds new homes for them. He said the event allows him to talk to people about the dog rescue agency.

"We do several demonstrations throughout northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin," he said. "It raises awareness about the rescue and what we do."

Wiegand thanked all the participants and the sponsors, Kerry Inc. and Regal, for making the Mushing for Meals event a success.