

Drug-free relay set for Saturday under full moon

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The 150 to 200 people expected to participate in this weekend's annual Drug Free Relay at the La Grande High School track will finish at 10 p.m. Saturday under a full moon.

This will be fitting because the relay runners and walkers, if history repeats itself, will cover close to 1,000 miles, approximately half the distance across the face of the moon.

The miles will add to the legacy of an enduring symbol of the commitment Union County residents have to a drug-free way of life. Runners and walkers have covered more than 30,000 miles on the LHS track since the relay started in 1998. The relay has raised more than \$85,000 for the community during this time. The money has been given to groups and organizations in the community promoting drug- and alcohol-free lifestyles.

"One of our goals is to act like a catalyst in our community to address drug and alcohol prevention and education," said DeAnne Mansveld, who is serving as relay co-director with Jessica Sутten.

This year's Drug Free Relay will begin at 10 a.m. Participants should be at the track by 9 a.m. to set up their team stations, including tents. Activities begin at 9:45 a.m. with a color guard presentation by High Valley Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 4060, the singing of the National Anthem by the LHS A Cappella Choir and opening remarks by Nigel Wrangham, a certified alcohol and drug counselor and prevention specialist. Wrangham is from the University of Oregon, where he is an instructor.

Many local entertainers will play at the relay. Those set to perform include Forgetting Onward, Chong Flippy, Al MacLeod and Friends, Kenny D and I4NI with Scott Arnson, Patty Sandlin Dance Arts and children from a Zumbatomic dance class.

Entertainment options that will be available for much of the relay will include inflatable bounce toys for children. Youths not on a relay team will be asked to make \$5 donation to use the inflatable bounce toys.

A volleyball tournament will again be conducted during with the relay. The tourney will begin at 1 p.m. All members of relay teams will be able to participate.

Major sponsors of the relay include the Union County Safe Communities Coalition, KCMB, 99.9 The River, Grande Ronde Hospital, The Observer, Boise Cascade, the Center for Human Development, the Union County Commission on Children and Families, Grande Ronde Recovery, EONI, SWA Productions, Super Talk, Boomer Radio and Mountain Therapy, which will provide a first aid station.

There is still time to register for the relay. The entry fee is \$350 per team. People who are not with a team but want to participate can for \$35.

Team packets and T-shirts will be available for pick up Thursday at noon and 6 p.m. at the CHD, 2301 Cove Ave. Team representatives should bring a team roster and the T-shirt sizes of members. Fees may be paid at this time.

A year ago 16 teams covered close to 2,000 miles at the relay. Topping the 16 squads was the LHS band team, whose 21 members logged 81.75 miles at the relay, surging in the final half hour to pull ahead of the Union County Sheriff's Department squad that placed second among 16 teams.

The sheriff's department also shone by winning the relay's volleyball tournament.

To register for the relay or for more information call Mansveld at 541-962-8822 or Suttan at 541-962-8876. Information is also available at the Drug Free Relay's website, www.drugfreerelay.org.