



Giving Back

By Barbara Palmer

Take Away

Foot Work

Raise money for a good cause. Help attendees get some exercise. See more of your host city. What's not to like about a fundraising run?

When the American Society for Therapeutic Radiation Oncology (ASTRO) was looking for ways to raise both money and awareness for its two-year-old Radiation Oncology Institute (ROI), adding a benefit run to the 2010 ASTRO Annual Meeting made perfect sense. Scheduled for the San Diego Convention Center on Oct. 31–Nov. 4, the meeting is expected to draw more than 10,000 attendees and create “great exposure for the institute,” which funds research and education focused on the role of radiation therapy in treating cancer, said Kathy Peters, ASTRO’s assistant director of development and corporate relations.

About 400 runners paid \$35 each to register for ASTRO’s inaugural “5K Run for the Future.” And more money could come from the run’s premier

of races that Anker has directed for meetings and conventions has more than quadrupled; this year, her company will oversee 40 to 50 such events.

Anker’s clients include organizations as well as race sponsors. One of the keys to a successful fundraising run, she said, is finding sponsors to cover staging costs — permits, insurance, signage, transportation — so the maximum amount of fees paid by attendees can go straight to worthwhile projects.

The American Society for Reproductive Medicine (ASRM) hired Anker to oversee its first-ever run, at its 2010 Annual Meeting, which was slated for the Colorado Convention Center in Denver on Oct. 23–27. Proceeds from the run, which had three sponsors, will go directly to fund

“I didn’t like running on a treadmill in a hotel fitness center.”

sponsor, Radiation Business Solutions (RBS), which has offered to donate \$5,000 in the name of any attendee who outruns an RBS employee who just happens to be a long-distance runner. Given that ASTRO’s members are health-care professionals who generally care about fitness, Peters said, “It all goes together hand-in-hand.”

ASTRO is just one of a growing number of organizations that are adding fundraising runs to their meeting schedules as a way to promote networking and fitness and to give something back to the community, according to Cheryl Anker, owner of Los Angeles-based Off ‘N Running Tours. A runner for more than two decades, Anker founded Off ‘N Running following an epiphany in a hotel fitness center. “I didn’t like running on a treadmill in a hotel,” Anker said, “and I figured that lots of people felt the same way.” Her business initially focused on leisure travelers, but in recent years the number

research, education, and advocacy programs in the reproductive health field, said Pam Gallagher, ASRM’s director of development.

The ASRM race was timed by electronic chips that runners placed on their shoes, and medals were awarded to the top finishers. But the event also included a one-mile walk, Gallagher said, to make sure that it was accessible to attendees at all levels of fitness. Anker said: “If runs were designed only for people who are in shape or are competitive, they would attract a very small group.”

Some attendees who signed up told Gallagher that they didn’t even intend to walk. “They just wanted to be out there for the fun of it,” Gallagher said. “We are a professional organization and our doctors are pretty busy — they go to one meeting after another. I think this gives them an opportunity to get a little exercise, see a little bit of the city — and to support our cause.” ■

Fundraising 2.0

Runners and walkers have raised millions of dollars for charity over the years using a model that asks their friends and colleagues to sponsor their participation in fundraising races. Now, websites such as www.active.com are adding a new wrinkle by providing a digital framework that allows participants to create personal sponsorship pages for event-based runs like ASRM’s Run for Reproductive Health, which was held last month.

Non-running members also are using the site to help fund the organization’s programs, according to ASRM’s Pam Gallagher. “They say, ‘I can’t run, but I’ll make a donation.’”

► Barbara Palmer is a senior editor of *Convene*.

Giving Back is sponsored by **Fairmont Hotels & Resorts**, www.fairmont.com.

ON THE WEB: To set up your own fundraising program — and access web-based training programs for prospective runners — visit www.active.com. For more information about Off ‘N Running Tours, visit www.offnrunningtours.com.