

40th Freeze for Food Beats the Pandemic

2021 Report

Summary

“We never cancel due to weather, but we pivot with the pandemic.”

Freeze for Food organizers had to modify their 40-year old motto as the 2020 pandemic made it clear that their 2021 event, planned to highlight Peace Corps Week and Peace Corps 60th Anniversary, would hit a wall of COVID-related challenges. Organizers braced for the worst, but sunshine on the weekend of March 6-7, 2021, and the generosity of runners and sponsors surprised all involved with a stellar success. The pandemic year event raised \$10,243, a record total, donated the fifth consecutive year to local non-profit, Open Doors for Refugees.

Key Decisions

At their initial September 28, 2020, meeting via Zoom, organizers fretted over the expectation of fewer runners, cancellation of permission for their long-time UW Arboretum running circuit, and concern over possible promotion benefits to offer to sponsors. Advice from Eric Arndt of RunSignUp and other event organizers led to a decision to make the race virtual rather than to cancel it. Runners and walkers would be able to run or walk anywhere between 6 am and 6 pm on both days of the March 6-7, 2021 weekend, submit their own times on the RunSignUp page and post selfies on Freeze for Food’s Facebook photo album.

Two Year Comparisons

The table below shows that while event participants were only half as many (252 in 2020 vs. 127 in 2021), their generosity in adding individual donations saved the day, totaling \$3,231, compared to one third that amount, \$1,050, in 2020. The virtual event was much less expensive to run, without park shelter rental, race bibs, awards, and refreshments for runners: in 2020 the event cost over \$4,394; in 2021 it cost only \$1,471, less than 1/3.

Nine sponsors brought the sponsor total to \$2,500, compared to \$1,750 in 2021. The \$500+ sponsor level included Group Health Cooperative of South Central Wisconsin and Willy Street Coop, while the UW International Division generously donated in-kind services. At the \$300+ sponsor level, Old National Bank, Karl’s Family Dentistry, Smart Motors Toyota, and Dental Health Associates of Madison all stepped up to show community support. The \$200+ level included Delta Remodeling and four individuals, Glenn Bechler, Joyce Muxfeld and two anonymous donors.

Two Year Comparisons

	Item	2020	2021
1.	RPCV Madison Contribution	\$2,000	\$2,000
2.	Sponsor Donations	\$1,750	\$2,500
3.	Runner Registrations	\$5,150	\$2,795
4.	Runner Donations to ODFR	\$1,050	\$3,231
5.	Other Donations to ODFR		\$712
6.	Race Sales (T-shirts, buffs)	\$975	\$ 95
7.	In-Kind Donation (Printing)		\$181
8.	Sub Total	\$10,925	\$11,352
9.	Expenses	-4,394	-1,471
10.	Potential ODFR Donation	\$6,531	\$10,043
11.	Donation to ODFR	\$6,900	\$10,043

As a fundraising event, Freeze for Food has thus far raised over \$112,615 for organizations that promote food security. This amount is part of \$1.5 million which RPCV-Madison has donated over the years to support domestic and global projects.

Promotion

A registration survey showed that the single most effective promotion was friend-to-friend word of mouth (50%). Forty per cent of participants had run before, while 30% heard about the race either from ODFR or RPCV-Madison publicity (15% each).

During race day, both [WISC TV \(Channel 3/CBS\)](#) and [WKOW \(Channel 27/ABC\)](#) did Zoom interviews with coordinators Madeline Urameck and Kate Schachter, respectively, featuring past video footage and still photos. Kate Schachter sent press releases to an estimated 23 media outlets, and Cassie Rademaekers coordinated postings and flyer drop offs at more than 100 locations. E-calendar postings were visible online via Wisconsin Public Radio, WORT-FM Community Calendar, Isthmus, and Madison Magazine, among others, and were listed at 14 running club sites. Gorgeous yard signs, designed by Ashley Gries as part of an impressive sponsor packet, remained unprinted due to cost, but Facebook promotion, including the [Freeze for Food Photo Album](#), RPCV Google listserv, several Mail Chimp newsletters, and e-mails to coordinators' personal friends, kept the date visible on social media..

Race packets were sent by US mail and included a handsome buff in blue, pink or black, featuring the "running bear" image, the 2021 RPCV International Calendar, and complimentary neck buffs donated both by Group Health Cooperative and Dental Health Associates.

Race Results

Runners self-reported their finishing times to RunSignUp, which managed registration for the 2021 Virtual Freeze for Food. Top male and female runners are here.

Event	Time	Age	Pace (Min/K)
5K Andrew Best	20:16	41	6.32
5K Janna McKee	27:24	29	8:50

Appreciation from Open Doors for Refugees

Timing for Freeze for Food's fifth consecutive donation to Open Doors for Refugees could not have been better. The new US administration, with its commitment to dramatically raising refugee ceilings, means that ODFR and its federally-contracted partner, Jewish Social Services (JSS), will begin receiving increased numbers of refugees. Funds will be applied toward gift certificates or checks for groceries, home supplies, furniture donations, ESL materials, and emergency grants for rent and medical bills.

Kudos to Coordinators

The coordinating team showed impressive RPCV depth. New members Kathleen Wannamuehler (Kenya 1994-96), Cassie Rademaekers (Nepal 1983-85) and Ashley Gries (Panama 2008-10) brought significant talent and new energy, much appreciated by veterans Kate Schachter (Ghana 04-07, Georgia 16-17), Tom Felhofer (Malawi 1988-90), Joyce Muxfeld, and Madeline Uранеck (Lesotho 2007-09). Ken Baun and Becky Wennlund served as liaisons to ODFR.

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PHOTO PAGE

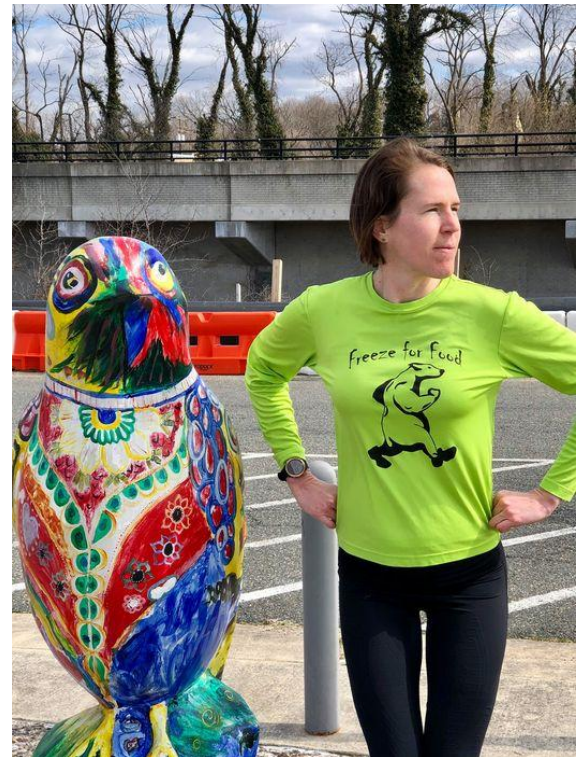


Photo captions:

Top (L-R): Becky Wennlund promotes F4F; Ashley Gibson shows off the running bear neck buff; Madeline Uraneck celebrates weekend's successful finish

Bottom(L-R): Cassie Rademaecker at finish; Joman Schachter runs at sunset; Steph Shelton, former F4F coordinator, runs in Hyattsville, MD

Thank You to our 2021 Sponsors

