

RACE DAY AID STATION

BY ASHLEY BURNS

DESCRIPTION:

The South Atlanta FCA Endurance Huddle is telling others about the “living water” Christ talked about in John 4:13, and they are using real water as the conduit.

For the past year the Huddle has teamed up with the local triathlon series Tri-Parks by hosting aid stations at their Atlanta-area races.

After seeing a number of bright yellow FCA Endurance jerseys at local triathlons, Tri-Parks Race Director Chuck Dunlop approached the Huddle to discuss how FCA Endurance might have a more established presence at the Tri-Parks events. He connected with Huddle Leader Mike Roby, and FCA Endurance was soon on board.

With Tri-Parks hosting six races per year and averaging 500 to 600 triathletes at each event, FCA Endurance is able to minister to more than 3,000 triathletes annually by hosting the first water aid station on each course.

Each aid station opportunity provides a perfect way to reach athletes for Christ. Set up just after the first transition exit, the FCA aid station plays Christian music as Huddle members pass out water, sports drinks and bananas to athletes along with smiles and encouraging words. Having the FCA Endurance aid station tent in the same area at every race also breeds familiarity within the racing community.

“The first year people would come up to us and say, ‘I know exactly where to expect you guys,’” Roby said. “Hopefully, the more we do this, the more people will start to recognize and look for us.”

Since many Huddle members compete in the events, they recruit an extended support system to work on race days. The Huddle arrives early to set up the station and then turn over the reins to their spouses and children to serve the participants. After Huddle members finish the race, they go back to the station to help finish distributing drinks and to cheer on fellow competitors.

In return for their volunteer efforts, Dunlap also recognizes FCA Endurance by putting their logo on the back of the race t-shirts and allowing the Huddle to say an opening prayer before the start of each race.

“This is really what we are called to do,” Roby said. “We feel like God emphasizes how important it is to serve others, so we share that same theory when it comes to races.”

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ACTION STEPS:

PREP WORK

- Connect with your local FCA Endurance Huddle. (Visit fcaendurance.org.)
- Research area endurance events and select one or more at which to serve.
- Contact the race’s director and ask about volunteer opportunities.
- Contact local grocery stores and ask them to donate cups, sports drinks and bananas.
- Collect water coolers/dispensers. (Make sure you evaluate how many you will need based on the number of participants.)
- Assign Huddle members to fill cups, hand out drinks, pick up trash and cheer on athletes.

EVENT

- Arrive early to set up the station and fill cups.
- Pray as a team before the race starts.
- Have Huddle members who aren’t handing out drinks cheer on the athletes.
- Continually fill new cups and pick up those that are discarded.
- Set out FCA Endurance materials for racers to take before and after the race.
- Properly clean up the aid station area after the event.

ADVICE

“The key is just to reach out. In the beginning, we found that most race directors or organizers were receptive to us, they just didn’t know we existed. Once we made contact and showed them our level of commitment and service, we got requests from other race directors who had heard about us and were interested.”

– Mike Roby, Huddle Leader
South Atlanta FCA Endurance

RESULTS

“It’s all been positive. In fact, two new Huddles have formed from this, one in Savannah and another in North Metro Atlanta. They have both stemmed from people at races who came to us wanting to know what FCA Endurance was about and who then went back to their communities and started Huddles.”

– Roby

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