

Run raises money for hurricane victims in Honduras

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On Saturday morning, BYU students ran, walked and roller-bladed in a charitable cause that, thanks to the hard work of the event's organizer, will help the suffering people of Central America.

Justin Rich, 22, a junior from Eugene, Ore., majoring in economics, said that Helping Eliminate Poverty in Honduras was started by students shortly after Hurricane Mitch to provide immediate relief for victims. But now that their immediate needs are taken care of, the people of Honduras need long-term help to rebuild their lives.

Rich volunteered to spearhead the event to provide help for the victims of the hurricane which hit Honduras in October of 1998. The storm left about 10,000 people dead and more than 1.3 million homeless.

The starting gun signalled the start of the run at 9 a.m. from the parking lot of the Smith Fieldhouse. The pack was led by marathon runner Dallen Ashby, 22, a Junior from Boise, Idaho, majoring in chemical engineering who finished the race with a time of 17-minutes, 44 seconds.

The run raised money to help the people of Honduras rebuild their lives through microcredit programs that give \$100-\$150 loans to help people set up small businesses. The money for the loans comes from fund-raising efforts like Saturday's run, which cost \$10 per runner.

"It works a lot better to build people up and help them help themselves," Rich said. He said groups of students have already talked to people to find their needs, and now they are setting up the loans and giving workshops on how to run a business.

But Rich said he was surprised when he experienced less support for the project than he had expected.

"It seemed like everything was against us the whole time," Rich said. "I went in to BYUSA a couple of times and nobody seemed to be able to direct me to the right person."

Rich said that the scheduling office told him that he had to get approval from BYUSA, but since H.E.L.P. Honduras is not a BYUSA sponsored club, they sent him to Janet Scharman, the BYU Dean of Students.

According to Scharman, the people at Student Life can help students with similar projects, but are

not able to give official permission if the project is academic related. The project was related to one of Rich's classes, Rich said.

The project was then referred to the Associate academic Vice President Cheryl Brown, Scharman said. Rich said he finally received approval three days before the race.

"It was frustrating," Rich said.

Scharman said she felt bad because Rich had to go through so much.

"It is a good cause. He had to put a lot of work into it," she said.

But Scharman said that BYU has very specific fund-raising policies that, unfortunately, do not always get communicated to students.

In fact, similar circumstances have actually caused BYU charities to lose money in the past when major contributors felt frustrated by too many requests, Scharman said. Instead, she said that the university prefers students go through BYU organizations so that proposals can be presented to donors all at once.

Scharman said they are currently working to push faculty members to inform students of the policies.

"It's a big university with a lot of faculty and students and a lot of times they see policies as restrictive and not that it actually helps them," Scharman said.

Despite the difficulties that he experienced, Rich said that he was pleased with the outcome.

"I was much relieved when everything finally did come together," Rich said.

Other participants in the race also expressed appreciation for the activity.

Stephen Ward, 26, a graduate student from Wilmington, Del., majoring in Geology, said, "I just want to help where I can. It's not really much, but it's fun to get out in a community effort and help out a little bit."

Heather Cline, 23, a junior from Colorado Springs, Colo. majoring in Secondary Education, said, "Anything you can do to help people down there will be welcomed with open arms."