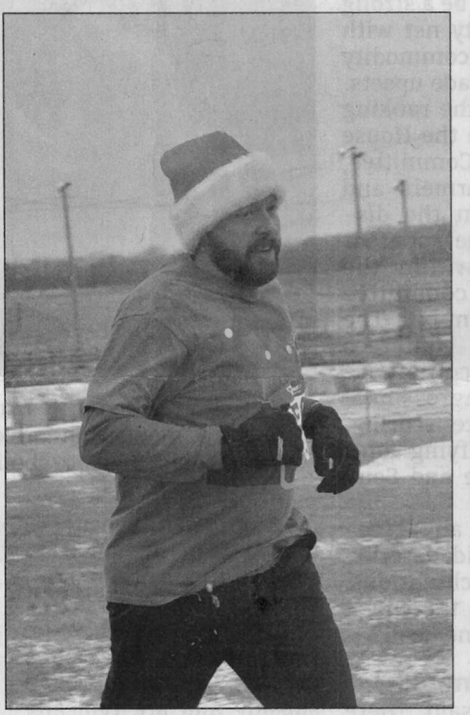
Otterdazzle: Ottertail's great holiday kickoff

Photos by Michael Denny / Perham Focus

Santa Clause during Otterdazzle 2018.



Robert Wagenman finishes the 5k with a time of 25 minutes and 13 seconds.

A runner makes her way to the finish line during the "Freezin for a Reason" 5k.

Holly Becker, was runner 575 in the "Freezin for a Reason" 5k run. The cold was rough on her but it wasn't going to stop her from running.

Runners wait for the 5k run to get underway.

By Michael Denny
Forum News Service

Otterdazzle, Ottertail's annual holiday celebration, started early this past Saturday and was composed of many events, including a pancake breakfast, visits with Santa, hay rides and much more.

Christmas cheer was in full swing. People from all around Ottertail braved the cold to welcome the month of December and the good tidings that come with it. Children scurried about, excitedly waiting for their coveted visit with Mr. and Mrs. Clause. Runners dressed in Christmas-themed athletic gear prepared for the Freezin' for a Reason 5K run, dancing about in an attempt to keep the blood pumping while the cold wind mercilessly battered them.

Lynsey Maloney, organizer of the 5K and kids fun run, praised the celebration. Proceeds from the run go toward A Measure of Healing Hearts for Childhood Cancer, a nonprofit organization that raises awareness about childhood cancer and supports families affected by it.

Maloney stood patiently in the cold waiting for runners to register: "It's cold, but it's Freezin' for a Reason, so you're freezin' for reason," she said playfully.

Maloney and her organization are in constant need of volunteers and urge anyone interested to contact her on the company website.

Registration closed, and one by one, elves, reindeer and other festively decorated runners began lining up on Maple Avenue. Holly Becker could be seen gleefully jumping in a desperate attempt to retain body heat prior to the run.

"Its cold but it's worth it," said Becker, decked out in full elf gear.

It was her first time participating in the run, and her nervous jumping quickly turned to excited anticipation as the runners took their mark. Officials thanked them for their participation and sent them off down the road.

One runner pulled ahead rather quickly. Robert Wagenman charged forward, not letting the cold slow him down. He was the first to finish the 5K, with a noticeable gap between him and the other runners. His finishing time was 25 minutes and 13 seconds.

Elsewhere, kids were gleefully lining up for a hayride. Children and parents sat tightly together for a fun winter ride through the streets of Ottertail.

"It's a fun experience; everyone has a good time, even in weather like this," said Jeff Wiebe, after dismounting his tractor. This was his third year of giving hay rides during Otterdazzle.

He said seeing the kids and adults enjoy traversing the town via his hay trailer is his favorite part of the event.

Within the halls of the Ottertail Community Center, children and adults enjoyed hot dogs and soda as they perused the many vendors set up in the garage. Additionally, crafts and games were present to occupy the kids as they waited to meet Santa Clause.

After much anticipation, Santa made his way through the community center to his throne as droves of children lined up to tell him their Christmas wishes. Santa amplified the holiday cheer tenfold. Children rushed to his knee as parents frantically took pictures, documenting the beautiful moment to be enjoyed for years to come.

The rest of the day included a lighting of the trees in the park, fireworks, and a chili bar at the community center.

Otterdazzle is sponsored by the Ottertail Business and Community Association and the Ottertail Lions.