

Fear The Walking Dead

Zombie Run For Brains Set For Saturday, Oct. 15

By **SHELBY MERTENS**

Daily News-Record

If you're a fan of AMC's "The Walking Dead," or if Halloween is your favorite holiday, the second Zombie Run for Brains will give you a fun thrill while benefiting a local cause.

The Zombie Run for Brains raises money for Crossroads to Brain Injury Recovery, a local nonprofit that provides services to victims of brain injury.

Set for Saturday, Oct. 15, at 11 a.m., participants are allowed to walk or run, although most are unable to simply walk through the scary Fear Forest.

"Most people run because they're being chased by zombies," said Darcy Bacon, event planner for Crossroads to Brain Injury Recovery.

The organization is partnering with Fear Forest, a seasonal Halloween attraction where those who dare walk through the forest trail and dodge zombies.

"It's a creepy place. ... It's a perfect location to have a zombie event," Bacon said.

The goal of the run is to survive the zombies who will be hiding in the woods, ready to pounce at moment's notice. Bacon described the terrain similar to that of a cross-country run, since runners will trek through a cornfield that leads into the woods. The trail has a path.

Each person gets three "life" belts [flashing football belts], which the zombies will try to take. The course totals 1.5 miles.

"If you get through the forest with at least one life belt left, you survived the Fear Forest," Bacon said.

What happens if you lose all three "life" belts? Don't sweat it, Bacon said.

"This is all just for fun, for charity," she said.

Those acting as zombies are volunteers from **Bridgewater College** and James Madison University. The volunteers are transformed into flesh-eating zombies by local makeup artists from Fear Forest and DarkWood Manor in Luray.

"[The zombies] look great," Bacon said. "The costumes are amazing."

Children are allowed to participate in the run, but parents be warned.

"Children need to be old enough not to be freaked out by people in scary costumes and makeup," Bacon said. "It's up to the discretion of the parents."

About 100 individuals participated in the Zombie Run for Brains in its first year.

"It was a heck of a lot of fun," said Jacob Penrod, board president of Crossroads to Brain Injury Recovery. "We were really impressed with the turnout last year. Everyone seemed to have a great time. It's a unique event."

Crossroads to Brain Injury Recovery was established in 2005 by Pat Harrison, a mother whose son suffered from a brain injury. Penrod said the organization was created to help those with brain injuries navigate the system and provide direct access to resources and services.

Penrod said most of their clients are injured due to car accidents, strokes, sports injuries or work-related injuries and suffer from short-term memory loss, imbalance and mood problems. The nonprofit works with victims to re-learn tasks they may have forgotten.

"Case managers are assigned to those with brain injuries and then they go out and help you with a wide variety of things," Penrod said. "A person might need medical devices like a cane or a walker, they may need rent assistance, or transportation to get across town, they might not remember how to write a grocery list or how to pay bills."

Proceeds from the Zombie Run for Brains will be funneled back to the organization.

"The money that we raise goes back into services in the community," he said. "These are people in the local area."

Penrod said the event is also meant to raise awareness about brain injury.

"We want the public to know that those resources are out there," he said.

Registration is \$25 for adults and \$20 for those ages 11 through college age. Kids 10 and under are free with one paid adult. Free T-shirts are available for those who register by Oct. 7. Registration can be completed online through Eventbrite. The run starts at 11 a.m. on Oct. 15.

Fear Forest is located at 6340 Oak Shade Road in Harrisonburg.

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A group of zombies chase participants through the woods during the 2015 Zombie Run for Brains at Fear Forest.

Daniel Lin / DN-R

Thursday, 10/06/2016 Pag.A08

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