

## Kahoa Elementary P.E Teacher Shares his Passion for the Pumpkin Run

Each year the Pumpkin Run in Lincoln gets anywhere from 2,500 runners to 4,000 runners, making it the largest 1-mile youth fun run in the nation. Elementary students (K-5) from the surrounding Lincoln area will toe the line for the 20th annual Pumpkin Run on Sunday, September 26, at The Railyard Lincoln.

P.E. teachers at most schools are too promote and recruit as many runners as they can to represent their school. One elementary school P.E teacher has a long history of going above and beyond recruiting some of the most runners annually.

Eric Vacek has been the P.E teacher at Kahoa Elementary school for 12 years, but a P.E teacher for 23 years. Vacek has been involved with the Pumpkin Run ever since he started at Kahoa as the P.E teacher.

Each year Eric looks forward to the Pumpkin Run. "I love the fall season. The race is very well organized. I know the kids look forward to a lot," said Eric. He also sees the value of the Pumpkin Run for kids' short term and long-term health. "The Pumpkin Run is a really good community, family, fun fitness event. Both the kids and parents love the Pumpkin Run," he said. He's heard many stories from former students who did the Pumpkin Run and then go on to run cross country in high school.

One of the things Eric looks forward to the most is recruiting runners from Kahoa. Eric uses multiple strategies and tips to recruit runners to be in the top ranks of the elementary school with the most runners. "I primarily talk about it consistently in class while the kids are stretching or warming up. I also read off the list of runners two or three times a week, so other classmates can hear who all is participating which encourages other kids to sign up. I also post on our Kahoa family Facebook page. Our principal also puts it in the newsletter," said Eric.

He also points out that Kahoa has had a long history of runner numbers thanks to other P.E teachers before him. "The two teachers before me were strong supporters of the Pumpkin Run. The only thing I had to do was pick it up and come up with my own strategies," Eric said.

The most runners Eric has ever had was 274 runners in 2019. Currently, Kahoa has 183 runners, with Wysong elementary leading the way with 197 runners. In total, over 2,000 runners have signed up so far.

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