

Viewpoints

A small band of criminals failed to stop the Ogden marathon volunteers

BY CAMILLE CAIN,
MELISA HARRISON AND
MIKE CALDWELL

Guest commentary

On Sunday, the Standard-Examiner provided outstanding coverage of the 2007 Zions Bank Ogden Marathon. Additionally, it told the story of the resulting economic impact and highlighted some of the behind-the-scenes efforts for the marathon and other events organized by the Greater Ogden Athletics Legacy Foundation.

Whenever thousands of athletes, volunteers, sponsors and spectators come together to pull off events like the Ogden Marathon, tens of thousands of stories result, each a compelling snapshot of this vibrant community. Those stories could fill volumes, but we only have these few paragraphs to cover the good, the bad and the ugly, so here goes.

First, the bad and the ugly: A small contingent of Ogden Valley residents, apparently upset over the morning's inconvenience of having to use one of the other two scenic drives



Harrison

Cain

between Ogden Valley and Ogden, decided to make their anti-marathon statement. After haggard volunteers had worked until 2:30 a.m. to set out aid station supplies for thousands of athletes, a small band of criminals took it upon themselves to upend over 130 portable toilets and steal significant amounts of critical water, food and medical supplies. The same exhausted volunteers, most operating on less than two hours sleep, discovered the vandalism and theft at 4 a.m., and set about uprighting the toilets and making radio and cell phone calls to have supplies replaced.

The sad thing is we are not talking about a couple of teenagers tipping an outhouse or two before moving on to toilet papering

a friend's house. This was premeditated, organized crime that could have had serious, even deadly, results. As temperatures on marathon day climbed into the 90s, medical personnel administered over 40 IVs and transferred four patients to the hospital with serious dehydration issues. Had the community not rallied to offset the calculated ugliness of a few, the situation could have been much worse.

Now the good: Upon hearing news of the events around Ogden Valley, volunteers rallied to transport bottled water from the finish line to the upper portion of the course where the thefts occurred. Additionally, in the pre-dawn hours of Saturday morning, bleary-eyed residents in Ogden Valley opened their doors to the panicked knocks of race volunteers, then opened their hearts and faucets to re-supply the life-saving water that had been stolen from thousands of runners — some of those runners were local friends, neighbors, cancer survivors and pregnant mothers, others were strangers from



Caldwell

to experience our community. With finish-line water redistributed to points along the course, race organizers rushed to a grocery store and purchased \$500 worth of bottled water for race finishers.

When the store manager (an Ogden Valley resident) later learned what had happened in Ogden Valley, she put two and two together and realized why the \$500 water purchase occurred at her store. She contacted race organizers and demanded that the store be allowed to reimburse the GOAL Foundation.

What a handful had attempted to destroy under the cover of darkness was rebuilt tenfold in the plain sight of a bright day by an engaged, caring and now galvanized community.

other areas of the state, while still others had come from all over the United States and even from international destinations

The greater Ogden area has been discovered and the resulting tourism can provide a lasting economic boost to our community, more money for schools, hospitals, parks and pathways. Statewide tourism revenue is estimated to pay over \$600 of each resident's tax bill every year. Some of our guests will pass through and give us their dollars for race-entry fees, hotel rooms, meals, gas and goodies. Others may not be content to stay for only a few days and many will decide to make this their home. With the understanding that like-minded people tend to seek each other out and congregate, we can only hope that the thousands of area residents who made signs of encouragement, rang cowbells, handed out water and cheered runners in the heat will win out over the mindless few who thought their actions could effectively remove the "welcome" mat this community has worked so hard to place.

The GOAL Foundation wishes to express a tremendous amount of

gratitude to those who stepped up on Saturday. This event does not happen without the Herculean efforts of volunteers, law enforcement professionals, sponsors and community members we witnessed. All of you that jumped in to showcase all that is great with our community remind us why we call this home and choose to raise our children here.

Elizabeth Andrew said, "Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart." Thank you to all Weber County residents who showed their hearts and gave athletes of all ability levels the opportunity to challenge themselves and have an unforgettable experience in our amazing community.

Cain is a former Weber County commissioner and the vice president of the GOAL Foundation. Harrison is a member of the GOAL board of directors and medical coordinator for the Ogden Marathon. Caldwell is the president of the Ogden-Weber Convention & Visitor's Bureau and a member of the GOAL board of directors.