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Headline: OU ROTC holds 4th annual SoonerStrong 5K

Summary: The OU ROTC is holding their annual fundraiser this Saturday, the SoonerStrong 5K. All the proceeds go to military-based organizations and the program's cadet fund thus creating a special sense of accomplishment for those playing a part in bettering the program.

Links:

1. <https://www.facebook.com/soonerstrong5k/>. This link is the homepage for the Sooner Strong event and provides visuals from the event including videos and pictures of the proceedings.
2. <http://www.soonerstrong.com/>. This is the OU ROTC's official website. Here you can access information such as interest in joining the program, scholarship opportunities, and provides contact information with any questions about the program.

The OU ROTC hosted its annual fundraiser, the SoonerStrong 5K on Saturday, March 30 with a record 300 runners bringing in more revenue than years before.

The course is located at the OU Armory, at 290 West Brooks. It is USATF certified and began at 9:30 a.m.

The morning began at 9:15 with the opening ceremony. The color guard presented the American and Oklahoma State flags, followed by the playing of the National Anthem. The runners stood with their hands over their hearts behind the starting line while other spectators and ROTC members stood off to the side. The ceremony ended with the Ruf Neks shooting their shot guns in the air with one hand and holding up the “one” in the other.

It was a silent, chilling yet thrilling moment. Shortly after, the runners were sent off through the course around campus.

Runners could participate in the SoonerStrong 5K however they’d like: walking it with your friends, family and loved ones, make a competition out of it or even sleep in and still donate. There were individual awards for first place and runner up in different categories such individual, male and female OU Army ROTC alumni, and male and female individual age groups.

The 5K is the ROTC’s biggest fundraiser.

Most of the money go toward the program’s cadet fund. This money improves training, pays for trips, different physical training events such as Bataan Death March and the Army 10-miler.

“To increase our training value within the program we have to have a cadet fund. That’s what the 5K means to us,” said Maddie Stone a senior Biology major who is the Commander of the Army ROTC. “It’s making money for ourselves which is a good feeling for all the cadets here.”

“With the funds raised from this event, we can facilitate better training opportunities that will offer cadets a learning curve above their peers” said Jack McDowell, a sophomore International Security Studies major who is a MS2 cadet in the ROTC. He’s directly benefitted by the money raised because part of his role in the army is training new cadets.

While a majority of the revenue does go directly toward cadet training, a portion goes to military-centered organizations. This year, the *Air Warrior Courage Foundation* is the beneficiary. “It means a lot to us to be able to donate that money,” said Stone. While the grand total has yet to be announced, the number only grows each year according to Stone.

Much preparation goes into making this event happen. They start raising money and reaching out to sponsors and T-shirt companies in September-October. Stone was the Event OIC (Officer in Charge), at last year's 5K. However, this year, she got a more relaxed experience and ran it with her dad, who inspired her to join the ROTC.

Behind the scenes, members were busy ensuring the runners were well taken care of. Nathan McKenzie, a freshman Health and Exercise major who takes classes twice a week at ROTC, was one of these people. On the day of the event he was responsible for pouring water for the runners when they finish, cleaning the armory afterwards, and putting away the tables that were used during the event.

This event is vital to the well-being of OU's ROTC program and has a special meaning to each one of its members.

"It's an honor being a part of the process," said McDowell - a process that celebrates and funds the training of young war heroes in the making.