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Good

Day of the dead

by Cheryl Fenton | January 16, 2012



Sorry, *Twilight* fans, but lately it seems like zombies have surpassed vampires as the monsters most in vogue. They're popping up in new video games like *Dead Island*, mayhem-filled movies like the recent flick *Remains* (itself based on a graphic novel), and TV shows like the critically lauded AMC series *The Walking Dead*. Even the US government jumped on the bandwagon last spring, when the CDC released a funny "Preparedness 101" primer to surviving a "zombie apocalypse" that was actually a colorful guide for real-life emergencies.

But the latest (and in our book, greatest) sign of the zombie zeitgeist is **Run for Your Lives**, a "zombie-infested 5K obstacle-course race" that has thus far scheduled nine events in locations around the country - including our neck of the woods. On Saturday, May 5, **Amesbury Sports Park** (12 South Hunt Road, Amesbury) will be transformed into a post-apocalyptic free-for-all filled with a dozen manmade and natural obstacles. You'll climb, crawl, and dive through mud and water (and probably some "blood," too) on your way to the finish line. But if you're not fast, you're food.

"People are obsessed with the idea of an afterlife or the unknown," says Run for Your Lives co-creator Derrick Smith. "It's fun to think up all of the ways to escape or kill zombies, or even survive an entire zombie apocalypse. With Run for Your Lives, it becomes a real-life experience."

At the start of the race, you'll be given a flag belt. Think flag football, except the other team's defensive line is the flesh-starved undead. Approximately 400 zombies will be spread across the course, "performing" in waves. So at any given time, there'll be about 200 zombies out to get you. Use your brains and brawn to outrun both stumblers (the slow ones) and chasers (the fast and really hungry ones), and look for hidden bonuses to boost your health along the way. Keep at least one flag intact, and you'll walk away with your life and, perhaps, a prize - plus an excellent excuse to celebrate. The post-race Apocalypse Party will feature live music, celebrity appearances, and an awards ceremony. Grab a beer and some grub, and check out vendors' art, crafts, and assorted zombie tchotchkes.

If running isn't your thing and slow-mo staggering is more your speed, there's still a place for you. Register as a zombie, and you'll get a beyond-the-grave makeover from onsite makeup artists and wardrobe personnel. Or enjoy spectator status with an Apocalypse Pass. Party like it's the end of the world while you watch your friends run for their lives.

While they're dodging the undead, they'll also be doing some good: a portion of ticket proceeds goes to the American Red Cross, an aptly chosen charitable partner. "We wanted to have a charity component," explains Smith. "When you think of zombies or when you watch *The Walking Dead*, there's a lot of blood. If there's a zombie apocalypse, people may need blood, assuming they don't join the undead."

Of course, it's not just the Red Cross that benefits. Runners can take comfort in the knowledge that they'd have an edge if a zombie apocalypse ever did come to pass. "Even if you read *The Zombie Survival Guide* 10 times or religiously play *Dead Island*, I don't think anyone will be prepared for the undead to take over the world," warns Smith. "If you participate in Run for Your Lives, you'll have a leg up."

That is, until a zombie grabs it.

Registration for the Boston Run for Your Lives race closes on April 13 for runners and May 4 for spectators. Zombie registration opens approximately three months before the race. Visit runforyourlives.com for details.

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