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1,600 Santas hit the streets in Arlington Hts.

By Deborah Pankey

Should Santa's sleigh need a power boost come Christmas Eve, perhaps he should look to Rich Daubert.

Wearing shorts and a lightweight Santa jacket barely covering his tank top, the 32-year-old Arlington Heights man was the first runner to cross the finish line Saturday in sixth annual Rotary Santa Run.

While many of the runners in the 5K race donned mittens, scarves, knit caps and enough sweatshirts to make them look Santa-like under their provided red suits and belts, Daubert and a few other serious runners showed up in their typical race-day garb.

"Whenever I race I wear shorts and a singlet," said Daubert as he pulled on warmer clothes after competing the course in 16 minutes, 35 seconds.

"I grew up in this town and I like to do this race," said Daubert, a Hersey High School graduate. "It's a unique event, and it benefits a good cause."

That cause is the Rotary Club and its programs, like international efforts to eradicate polio and local efforts to feed families, bring Christmas presents to children and get unemployed people back to work.

"This is our major fundraiser now, about \$50,000," Rotary Club race director Ron Crawford said. "It's fun to see a crowd of Santas running down the street. ... It brings people into downtown for the holidays."

"It's a great community event," Arlington Heights Village President Thomas Hayes added, his foggy glasses peeking out from his fake white beard and red Santa hat. "It's become one of my favorite events."

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