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Competitions in Roanoke went from bed to worse

By RACHEL REYNOLDS

Eleven brightly painted beds were pushed, shoved and bounced up Jefferson Street on Saturday as volunteers from area businesses competed in the Third Annual Downtown Roanoke Bed Race to benefit the United Way.

In coordination with the race was the city's first Outrageous Olympics in which representatives of local eateries competed in a tray race, and members of the public squared off in an ice cream-eating contest and a Mello Yello Swallow.

When members of the WROV radio team, dressed in tuxedos and tennis shoes and carrying wine glasses and cigars, were asked about their strategy for winning, Bruce Jacobson said, "Winning is out of the question; survival is the key. We've all been practicing a lot. This is not our first encounter with a bed."

Other teams took their beds more seriously. Employees of Lewis-Gale Hospital, the 1982 champions, huddled to discuss racing plans before the first heat.

Twenty-five teams were entered in the five categories competing in a men's, women's and mixed couples races and being judged on bed's theme and participants' costumes. Each team paid a \$50 entry fee.

Last year's race, sponsored by Downtown Roanoke Inc., collected \$450 for United Way, Downtown representative Gale Sowers said.

This year, proceeds totaled more than \$1,250.

In the bed theme and decoration contest, Lewis-Gale Hospital and Community Hospital tied for first place. Lewis-Gale's bed supported a 6-foot-tall anniversary cake with balloons to celebrate the hospital's 75th anniversary. Community's bed had a "Germ Busters" theme with several polka-dotted germs and three exterminators in nylon suits wearing energy packs.

Members of the Roanoke Valley Psychiatric Center dressed as pillow people to win the costume event.

The Roanoke Memorial Hospital men's team pushed their bed from Kirk Avenue to Franklin Road in a record 36 seconds, winning the men's race.

Not to be outdone, Roanoke Memorial women won the women's race in a record 54 seconds.

The coed Community Hospital team won the mixed competition.

Four young women from Western Sizzlin' Steak House on Williamson Road showed great agility in winning the tray race as they maneuvered obstacles while carrying five glasses of water.

Chugging contestants Mason Shupe and David Tuck gulped the most Mello Yello soft drink in the shortest amount of time to win the two events. Each won a case of Mello Yello.

And Roanoker Ray Melton won his weight, 184 pounds, in ice cream after winning the ice cream-eating contest by downing about a half-gallon in five minutes.