

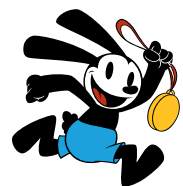
RUNNING FOR THE

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by TYLER MCNULTY

**R**unners from across the globe travel to the Walt Disney World Resort every year to run in one, or multiple, of our race weekends. There are even virtual races that runners can complete from their home. Whether running in Florida or somewhere else around the globe, most runners have one goal in mind: to earn a coveted medal. Here at Walt Disney World Resort, a small but mighty team works behind the scenes to create and design these unique medals, which feature a vast array of characters, from Mickey Mouse and the fab five to *Star Wars*.



Design director Will Gay, senior art director Steve Carsella and professional intern Amanda Diaz all contribute to the creation of medals for our race weekends, which usually takes between two and three months. The creative process begins with paper sketches and then later shifts to design on the computer.

As a starting point, the team finds inspiration in the theme of each of our race weekends, like princesses for the February race and *Star Wars* in April. “We like that there’s continuity for the runners. From the minute they register to when they finish the race, we want a story told throughout. The medals are the end of that story,” Steve said.

For example, the 2019 *Star Wars* Rival Run Weekend was all about famous *Star Wars* rivalries. To embody the theme, the medal for each of the three races held that weekend featured two characters, one from the Light Side and one from the Dark Side.



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“The challenge medal is truly unique because it’s animated. One side has Luke Skywalker and the other has Darth Vader. Out of all the medals I’ve designed, it is definitely my favorite,” Steve said.

Adding movement to medals isn’t something new. For the 2019 Walt Disney World Marathon, the team came up with a design that creates the illusion of Mickey Mouse running. It is Will’s favorite medal: “There’s been motion done on medals before but never to make it look like a character was running.”

Regardless of their preferences, Will, Steve and Amanda all agree on what makes each medal unique – the characters. “Being able to think outside of the box, yet within the story, of each of these characters makes creating each of these medals an exciting challenge. We want to pay homage to each of their worlds in something runners will cherish,” Amanda said.

