

Recap Run to Read Summer 2006

The Run to Read has never had a “local runner” win the 15K until last Saturday when East Fairmont High School graduate Will Hunter cruised to victory in a time of 57:18. Hunter, who won the first Run to Read 5K in 1999 (there was no 15K that year) now resides in Morgantown.

The women’s 5K may have been the most competitive event this year with the first 6 runners finished under 22 minutes-the most since 2000 on the old course. Keri Bland, winner of the last 2 cross country state championships while running at North Marion High School, led the parade with her course record breaking time of 20:09. Stephanie Hatfield set the women’s 20-24 course age group record finishing in 20:16 which was good for 2nd place. Hatfield had track times of 17:56 in the 5000 meters and 36:50 in the 10,000 meters this spring while competing for West Virginia Wesleyan.

Other women finishing under 22 minutes were third place finisher Chelsea Clark who rewrote the course record for 13-15 year olds with her time of 21:29. Fourth place finisher Emily Corley ran 21:38, fifth place finisher Nicole Tingler had a time of 21:43 and sixth place finisher Melanie Watkins just got under 22 minutes with her 21:58 clocking. Watkin’s performance set a new course age group record for women 25-29.

Brandon Miles took a week off from competing in the Morgantown Area Grand Prix (MAGP) and won the 5K in 18:12. Drew Richardson, a member of North Marion’s 2005 state cross country championship team, took 2nd in 18:33 while East Fairmont’s Trey Stoller finished third with a time of 18:56. Jeff Efaw of Mannington broke up the “youth movement” in the 5K with his 4th place finish. (14 of the first 16 finishers were under 30.) Efaw shattered the men’s masters’ record in the 5K by about 30 seconds with his 19:20 effort.

Other members of North Marion’s championship team running Saturday were Zach Tennant who finished 5th overall with a time of 19:54 and Neil Bland who was 9th overall finishing in 20:07. (Bland beat his sister by 2 seconds.)

Among others breaking 5K course records (these go back to 2002 when the course was redesigned and USATF certified) were women Lori Hager, 35-39 age group, 26:00 and Alice Tenney 55-59 age group 30:31. In addition to Efaw, the following men set course records in the 5K: Grafton’s Zach Tennant, 12 & under age group, 21:57; Lew McGrath, 40-44 age group, 19:59; Doug Campbell, 55-59 age group, 21:12; Joe Turner 60-64 age group, 25:18; Albert McQuain, 70-74 age group, 27:34 and Maurice Miller 75-79 age group, 31:21. Miller also broke his old course records in the 15K, 1:34:43, and for combined times (15K + 5K) 2:06:04.

Melanie Cox of Knoxville, TN, won women’s honors in the 15K by running a 1:06:48. Following were Cathy Ricker of Morgantown, finishing in 1:08:12; and Shelley Ralston of Uniontown, PA, in 1:08:27; Ricker set a course record in the 25-29 age group; Cox set a course record in the 35-39 age group and Ralston set a record in the 50-54 age group.

Ricker also had the best combined time for both the 15K and 5K (1:31:41). Canonsburg's Grace Goffi broke her own course record in the 60-64 age group with a time of a time of 1:37:07.

On the men's side in the 15K, assistant race director Jim Cummings was second overall in the 15K running a time of 1:00:32. Following was Earl Ambrozak in 1:00:36. Ambrozak was the fastest of 13 runners finishing both the 15K and 5K in 1:20:59.

Men setting age group course records in the 15K beside Maurice Miller were Jim Banks in the 60-64 age group with a time of 1:04:58 and Jim Bailey in the 65-69 age group who finished in 1:12:18.

Sandra "Sam" Kelley was the overall 5K race walk winner while Robert Wright was the first men's finisher in the walk.

Race organizers thank our "front of the shirt sponsors": UPS, Dominion, Yimes-West Virginian and the United Way and race organizers thank the "back of the shirt" sponsors: Monongahela Valley Bank: WesBanco: the Pepsi Bottling Group; Capitol Doors, Inc; Fairmont Federal Credit Union; TMC Technologies, Inc.; State Senator Roman W. Prezioso, Jr; the Marion County Adult Education Center, the Marion County Police Reserves and McDonald's of Fairmont. Special thanks go out to Dan Talbot and the Marion County Parks and Recreation Commission.

The Run to Read Races are very appreciative of all the volunteers who make this event possible. Two groups worthy of mention are the Youth Academy and the West side 4H Club. A special thanks goes out to Cody Gallagher of the Busy Bison 4H club for recruiting participants to enter the fun run/walk.

Last but not least we thank all the runners, walkers and fun runners who came out. Without you there would be no Run to Read Races.

Race organizers are planning next year's run to read Races for either the June 16 or June 23 in 2007 depending upon plans for the Greater Clarksburg 10K. If you did not win a "bobble head" this year, then you have a year to train for another next chance at a "head turner".

The 2nd annual run to Read Half-Marathon is planned for January 6, 2007, on the rail trails near Prickett's Fort State Park. Proceeds from both events (the summer race and the winter race) benefit Literacy Volunteers of Marion County, a United Way Agency.