

Bittersweet Reunion at 9th Annual Run to Read Races

Eight former East Fairmont High School cross country runners turned out on June 23, 2007, to run a 5K in memory of their former coach, Sallie Hunter, who died of breast cancer on May 31. The Hunter family has a history with the Run to Read Races going back to the inaugural year of 1999 when Will Hunter and Holly Hunter (now Holly Gooss) won the first Run to Read 5K. Sallie ran in the 2000 Run to Read 5K winning her age group.

Will and Holly (two of Sallie's four children) also ran on Saturday. Will Hunter, who last year's 15K, took second overall in the 5K running 16:37. Alderson Broaddus College Cross Country Ryan Skotnicki won with a time of 16:31 on the certified double loop course. Skotnicki won the state boys high school cross country championship in 2004 in AAA running for University High. Holly Gooss, a former East Fairmont High School and Virginia Tech runner, won her age group in the 5K and her husband Larry Gooss likewise won his age group.

After a pair of 3rd place finishes in the 5K, Chelsea Clark came away with her first win in the 5K running 21:32. Clark earned all state honors as a 9th grader last fall running cross country at Fairmont Senior High School. Former teammate Emily Corley was second with a time of 22:04. Laura McClellan took third in 22:22.

North Marion's standout cross country and track runner Zach Tennant took 3rd in the 5K running 16:53. Tennant, who was 5th in 2006 at the Run to Read 5K, had a huge 3 minute and 1 second improvement over last year's time (19:54.)

"The weather was ideal for ... the Run to Read Races with temperatures in the 50's when the 15K began..." according to the local Times West-Virginian. Masters runner Larry Taylor out dueled Karsten Brown in the 15K, 54:33 to 54:50. Taylor also won the 15K in 2004 and 2001 while finishing second in 2002 and 2000. In 2002 he set the master's record with a time of 52:53. (His 2001 time of 52:04 was run before the 15K was certified.) Both returned later in the morning running the 5K where Brown prevailed running 17:50 (good for 4th overall) compared to Taylor's 17:58 which was good for 5th and a new master's record in the 5K to go along with the 15K master's record. Taylor won the "combo" award over Brown with a time of 1:12:31 compared to Brown's 1:12:40. Taylor's combo time was the best ever recorded.

In the women's 15K Erin Imler of Pittsburgh won over Cathy Ricker and Cindy Goodwin both of Morgantown. Imler, who has run for Pittsburgh's elite running team, the Pharaoh Hounds, ran 1:07:56 compared to Ricker's 1;12:05 and Goodwin's 1;12:32. Ricker was also the runner up last year in the 15K while Goodwin lowered 2 minutes and 14 seconds off last year's time.

Jamie Brooks won the race walk in 31:07 besting her male counterpart Craig Baer whose time was 32:38. Both ran in the 15K earlier in the morning (but hopefully they did not run in the racewalk.) John Woolfitt, who was the third male overall in the 5K walk was

the “long distance” winner coming from Arizona City, Arizona. Woolfitt is the oldest of race director Jim Woolfitt’s 2 brothers.

A record 110 runners completed the 5K run, bettering the record of 109 finishers in both 2000 and 2004. Those running in memory of Sallie Hunter (as noted at the beginning of this write-up) certainly helped in setting the participation record. Several of those running in this year’s 5K were teammates on the East Fairmont High School girls cross country team which won a state championship in 1999, recorded a runner up finish in 2000 and finished fifth in 2001. It was not only a reunion of former teammates but a reunion of runners with a race as many of those former teammates returned to a race they had run in its early years.

We would like to thank all the individual volunteers and organizations who helped with the race as well as our sponsors:

Our “gold” sponsors: Dominion, Times – West Virginian, Tree of Life Church (TOLC) and the United Way. Dominion was our biggest cash donor. TOLC was our second largest cash donor. TOLC supplied the enthusiastic volunteers at 2 of the 15K water stops, many of whom participated in the fun run later in the morning. The Times – West Virginian helped not only financially but by placing entry forms in the local paper. A big thanks to John Veasey for the publicity. The United Way supports Literacy Volunteers of Marion County all year long.

Our “silver” sponsors: Monongahela Valley Bank, Wesbanco, Pepsi, Caipol Doors, Inc; Fairmont Federal Credit Union, Global Science & Technology, Galaxy Global, state senator Roman W. Prezioso, and MCPARC (Marion County Parks and Recreation Commission). MCPARC continues to be very helpful with our events supplying manpower before, during and after the race. MCPARC also makes the pool passes possible.

Our bronze sponsors: McDonald’s of Fairmont, Kime Floral, Family Dollar, Speedway Market, Burger King, Hardees, Domino’s, Wendy’s, and Shop’n’Save.

We thank the Marion County Police Reserves for traffic control and the City of Fairmont for providing a lead police car.

We thank the Marion County Adult Education Center for the use of their building.

Race organizers are planning the 3rd annual Run to Read Half Marathon for January 5, 2008 at the rail trails adjacent to Prickett’s Fort State Park. The 10th annual Run to Read Races will be tentatively held on June 21, 2008, assuming our information on the date of the Clarksburg 10K (June 14, 2008?) is correct.