

At 30th Darien Road Race, Darienites keep top times local

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Fairbanks Photo/George McKnight photo

Darienites Chase Pizzonia and Kate Lyons kept the Darien Road Race titles local at the 30th running the annual race.

On a sunny, 75-degree Sunday, Sept. 20, 510 runners and hundreds of spectators gathered at Darien's Pear Tree Point Beach to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Darien Road Race.

"We are delighted with this year's turnout of runners and supporters from all over Connecticut and many more from out of state," Mary Green, founder and this year's chairman of the race, said. "The race got its start in 1979 with a mission to help fight cancer and since then we have attracted thousands of supporters who want to give something back to Darien and its surrounding towns," she said. "Our 30th anniversary was a big success."

The site was decorated with festive balloons and banners, and the music of Tone, Darien High School's popular Rock & Roll band, filled the area. Booths sponsored by local organizations were set up under the Big Tent to provide activities and prizes for kids and adults alike. Moore Rehabilitation, a 20-year race sponsor, had exercise specialists on hand to help runners warm up for the race and work out any kinks afterwards. The Darien Lions provided food and beverages at their concession stand, proceeds to go to the race. Pear Tree Point School provided overflow parking, which allowed many race-goers easy access to the event.

During the pre-race ceremony, First Selectman Evonne Klein gave a warm welcome and presented a town proclamation designating Sept. 20, 2009, to be Darien Road Race Day. The race also was recognized by the State of Connecticut with another proclamation read by State Sen. Bob Duff of Norwalk, who represents most of Darien.

Peter Gogolak, grand marshal of the race, also served on the race committee of the first Darien Road Race in 1979. After receiving instructions from race director Hank Morgan,

Gogolak and a bagpiper led the runners to the starting line where 329 runners started the 10-kilometer (6.2-mile) course, followed shortly after by the start of 181 who ran the Loop — the fun-run 1.5 mile course.

A fundraiser to benefit the Bennett Cancer Center at Stamford Hospital, the Whittingham Cancer Center at Norwalk Hospital, and the Community Fund of Darien, the Darien Road Race raised more than \$35,000 this year from sponsors, runners, and spectators. Over its lifetime, the event has raised nearly \$835,000 for cancer support and social service organizations that serve the communities in and around Darien.

The 2009 Darien Road Race was made possible by the financial contributions of Halstead Property Wheeler; Tibbetts, Keating and Butler Attorneys-at-Law; Atria Darien; BMW of Darien; David Lerner Associates; David Osherow DDS; The Moore Center for Rehabilitation; Heights Pizza; Lucy; Merrill Lynch; and Methodist Family Center Preschool.

Other friends of the race include The Darien Times and 96.7 The Coast, the official media sponsors, the Darien Boat Club, which provided the tent, the Darien Lions Club, which provided refreshments and food, and George McKnight at Fairbanks Photo, the official photographer.

This year's race committee included: Laurie Anderson, Cindy Brown, Courtney Chesson, Mary Green, Joan Hewson, Hank Morgan, Suzanne Schintzius, Barb Simms, Sylvia Spitalnick, Christie Stone and Lisa Stout.

After the race, runners and spectators enjoyed a cupcake or piece of birthday cake provided by Shaw's as everyone joined in singing "Happy Birthday" to the Darien Road Race.

The Jim Fixx Award, presented to the runner who raises the most in contributions, was won by Emily Conn, 11, of Darien, who raised \$680.00. Martha Olson, also of Darien, was not far behind with \$675.00 in contributions.

Atria Darien Awards were presented to the oldest runner, Neil Knox, 88, of Darien, and the youngest runner, Griffin Green, 3, also of Darien.

The grand prize, a 24-speed bicycle provided by BMW of Darien, was presented to Mary Green, who raised \$1,435 in contributions. Green is giving the bike to a long time volunteer of the race who is currently battling cancer.

Awards were also presented to runners in both races. The 10K runners with the fastest finish times: First place, Chase Pizzonia, 23, of Darien (32:23); second place, Morgan Seybert, 23, of Ridgefield (33:40); third place, Jeff Zarrilli, 28, of Darien (34:38). The top female winners were first place, Kate Lyons, 45, Darien (39:53); second place, Mary Zengo, 44, Wilton (40:05); 3rd place Meredith Kalish, 33, Greenwich (42:05). Other 10K awards were given to men and women in age categories.

In the Loop, awards were presented to the top five male winners: Michael Gosset, 49, Norwalk (10:02); David Maturo, 16, Darien (10:02); Jackson McGoldrick, 12, Darien (11:09); Brian Davey, 13, Darien (11:14); Tyler Wist, 14, Darien (11:15). The top five female runners were Charlotte Harmon, 9, Darien (12:00); Celia Martzolf, 12, Darien (12:12); Allie Stearns, 13, Rowayton (12:50); Claudia Fauber, 35, Pelham Manor, N.Y. (12:56); Ellie Goldberg, 11, Stamford (13:02).