

2nd Annual Middle Earth 10K Race a Success

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Runners leap forward at the start of the "Run from Winter" 10K race. Top finisher, PJ Meany, is on the center-left in a green shirt. / Chessie Photo

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Middle Earth hosted its second annual "Run From Winter" 10K Run on Sunday, March 20 in Duke Island Park. Both the weather and the park were beautiful, and the race was a great success.

Middle Earth registered 586 runners this year, and 518 completed the race. Despite their common purpose, race participants were quite diverse, ranging in age from 9- to 81-years-old and coming from all over the country. Besides New Jersey, runners represented New York, Pennsylvania, Kansas, Florida, Idaho, Massachusetts, Virginia, Delaware, and Nebraska. Somerville's own mayor, Brian Gallagher, even joined in the fun.

"The race happens at a good time with cooler weather, well-run, and (has) a flat course in a nice environment," said one race participant. "For those who compete in the Grand Prix competition, there are not too many races in this category so we are attracted to this race. I traveled an hour from Pennsylvania to run it."

The top male finishers were: PJ Meany from Delaware, 1st Place, 31:30.88; Rich Luettchau from Middlesex, NJ, 2nd Place, 33:23.28; and Nick Schnabel from Somerset, NJ, 3rd Place, 36:03.00. The top three female finishers are: Alexandra Niles from Montclair, NJ, 1st Place, 38:48.25; Tara Zimliki from Branchburg, NJ, 2nd Place, 41:18.34; and Sheila Courter from Westfield, NJ, 3rd Place, 42:23.20. Middle Earth congratulates all of the runners and thanks them for their participation.

Middle Earth was overwhelmed with the community support this race received. Sponsors of the event included Ferasco, Tara's Bootcamp, and Terra Tek. A number of local organizations donated goody bag items, food, and prizes for the winners. Over 50 volunteers showed up at the event including Middle Earth staff, kids and family members; St. Ann's Confirmation Candidates from Raritan, NJ; Psi Sigma Phi Multicultural Fraternity; Michael's Miracles; Adult Day Center; Girl Scout Troop 499 from Bridgewater; and the 4H Senior Council. Middle Earth appreciates all of the volunteers and sponsors.

"I ran the race both last year and this year," said a race participant, "and it is, by far, my favorite race out of nearly a dozen I do every year."

The event proceeds benefitted Middle Earth, a nonprofit that has served youth in Somerset County for almost 40 years. Middle Earth's programs offer local children a safe environment where they can hang out with their friends, engage with caring adults who listen, obtain help with homework or employment searches, participate in fun group activities, and volunteer for community service opportunities. Their programs also teach basic life skills such as budgeting, cooking, obtaining a driver's license, as well as positive decision making skills, acceptance of consequences for their actions, mentoring and leadership skills. All of their programs, which are free to youth, guide kids in learning respect for themselves and others and choosing positive alternatives to gangs, drugs and crime.

For more information, visit www.middleearthnj.org or call (908) 725-7223.