

Record Number of Runners Participate in Annual Berkeley Heights 5K

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BERKELEY HEIGHTS, NJ – It's hard to say which was more perfect – the weather for this morning's annual Berkeley Heights Charity Road Race and Fitness Walk, or the enthusiasm. Tara Zimliki of Branchburg was the winner of the women's division with a time of 20:07. John Hendy of Berkeley Heights was the winner of the men's division, with a time of 18:35.5.

A record number of runners – nearly 600 – took part in the 16th annual event, held to raise funds for local non-profit organizations. The race, held at Memorial Field, drew runners from all age groups, from teenagers to over 80.

“Today speaks for itself,” said event organizer Dr. Pat Smith. “The township, community organization, businesses, and residents coming together for an event that benefits so many in the community. We had a record-breaking turnout on a beautiful day.”

In addition to the race, which included runners and walkers and a few of the smallest residents in strollers, kids participated in a Fun Run across the soccer field.

Non-runners and families enjoyed the fun by participating in a 1.5-mile fitness walk, which wound through sections of the tree-lined residential 5K course.

Community spirit was high as residents, businesses and local officials came out to support the event, which has become one of the most popular fall events in town.

“I'm happy to support great events like this,” said Tom Barton, recreation director. “It's part of what makes Berkeley Heights such a great place to live.”

“It's a beautiful day for the race,” added Mayor Joe Bruno. “It's a great thing Dr. Smith does here.”

Nng, one of the sponsors of the event, had a table set up at the field, as did many other businesses and organizations.

“Nng is proud to support one of its own members, Dr. Pat Smith of Smith Chiropractic, with running, walking and being a gold member sponsor of the race,” said Robin Hoy. “Nng is a trusted source of local referrals and a proud supporter of the communities we serve.”

Another event sponsor, Investors Bank, provided refreshments for the runners. Julianne Simmons, branch manager in Berkeley Heights, said, "Investors believes in getting involved and giving back to the communities where we are located."

The Berkeley Heights Rotary Club members volunteered at the event, which the club chose as this month's service project.

"The Rotary Club of Berkeley Heights is excited to volunteer at this year's race," said Michael Shapiro, club president. "We chose to make this event our service project for September because Dr. Smith and the 5K do so much good for the Berkeley Heights community. We're happy to support them."

For the second year, the event also included a blood drive, hosted by the Red Cross.

The Berkeley Heights Charity Road Race and Fitness Walk was established in 1996 to help lend support to non-profit organizations. Since its inception, the event has assisted more than 30 charitable organizations. It is sanctioned by the USA Track and Field Association and is a 500-point race in the New Balance New Jersey Grand Prix Series.

For a full list of the winners, visit www.berkeleyheights5k.com.