

Record turnout for Honor Connor, and teen winner scores a PR



By Fiona Green



The Honor Connor race in North Richland Hills is growing in popularity every year. Saturday morning's (May 21) event attracted more than a record 1,000 runners who came to run or walk the 1-mile or 5K in honor of Connor Gage, a teen who tragically died in a diving accident in 2012. (Start of 5K shown above.)



Since his passing, Connor's family has honored him in the most amazing ways, touching many lives in the local community and abroad. Their message is one of buoyancy in the water and in life. As well as educating people about safety in open water and swimming pools, they have undertaken a staggering number of projects that have changed people's lives for the better -- funding the purchase of new sonar equipment for emergency lake searches; paying for a PSA about the importance of life vests, providing sewing machines for poor women in Honduras and sending 1,000 pairs of shoes to children in Uganda. The list of projects is almost endless.

The 5K was advertised as one of the happiest races in the Metroplex as his family wished to create an uplifting event that celebrated Connor and the way he lived his life. Looking around at all the smiling faces Saturday morning, they seem to have achieved this goal. As a bonus gift, all registered runners received a pair of running socks. Age group winners received unique smiley face medals while Overall, Masters and Grandmasters winners received a special smiley trophy, yellow smiley spatula and an Honor Connor winner flag, which organizers draped over their shoulders like a cape!

Many talented runners vied for the top spots with the younger crowd once again leading the way. On the male side, 17-year-old Richland High School runner Greg Fehribach scored another overall victory. I first met Greg three years ago at a race where he had been misdirected on the course but still achieved an overall win. His goal then was to break 18 minutes. Saturday he achieved yet another goal by breaking 16 minutes, covering the course in a PR 15:54, a minute and a half ahead of runner-up, 15-year-old

Paul Anderson.

On the female side, 19-year-old Kaitlyn Tharp (pictured with Greg) won the overall title in 19:33, a minute ahead of Samantha Joray. Tharp graduated from Richland High School in 2015 and is entering her sophomore year at Texas A&M, Kingsville, where she is studying to receive a degree in Marketing and Advertising.

She runs for the Kingsville track and cross-country team, usually distances ranging between 5K and 10K. Her PRs are 5K -- 19:18, 6K -- 23:47, 10K -- 40:32. Her goals are to break 19 minutes for the 5K and 38 minutes for the 10K. Tharp's favorite distance for now is the 5K "because it is a challenging yet strategic race that shows true strength and endurance," but she hopes to soon start testing herself more at the 10K distance.

When asked if there was anything readers might be interested to learn about her, she mentioned she has been transitioning to a vegan diet and explained if there was anything she could do to benefit her running and her team, she would seize that opportunity. It seems to be working out for her so far!