

Almost fall weather for the Fighting Autoimmunity race

By Fiona Green



It was a perfect morning for racing on a fairly cool Saturday, Sept. 3 morning and the Andy Brown Park in Coppell was the perfect place for a race. Over 100 children showed up for the one-mile race, followed by around 200 runners who had signed up for the Fighting Autoimmunity 5K.



The 5K actually was described on the website as a 3.22-mile race. I'm not sure why organizers didn't make the race a standard 5K as the course was an out and back and could easily have been adjusted to make it a 5K, but the extra distance didn't seem to bother the runners.

Benefits from the event were to be split between two organizations. The first recipient is the CONQUER Project (Collaboration on Neuroimmunology: Question, Understand, Educate, Restore), a collaborative effort at UT Southwestern that hopes to solve critical issues for Autoimmune patients by conducting research and coordinating clinical efforts.

The second organization benefiting from race proceeds is CAP, the Children's Alopecia Project, which is the only non-profit organization devoted specifically to supporting children with the incurable autoimmune hair loss disease, alopecia areata. They do so by raising awareness about alopecia, providing support for children and their families, and building self-esteem in children living with alopecia. I spoke with youngster Cole Kinnan, who told me he was looking forward to participating in a CAP organized camp in Maine next year.



Winning the female title in the 3.22-mile race was 14-year-old Brissell Melendez of Dallas, who clocked 22:06. The next two finishers also were 14 year olds, Rhyle Mckinney and Lanie Rodgers of Argyle, who both ran a 5K for the first time last week! Her father, Jesse, signed up Melendez for the



race. Jesse was a competitive runner in his youth, capable of knocking out a 10K in around 32 minutes. Brissell's 10-year-old brother, Nathaniel, placed second in the mile race, covering the course in an unofficial 6:30. (Top photo left is Brissell and Nathaniel)

On the male side, the overall title was easily won by 18-year-old Raymond Parral of Keller (bib 166), who covered the course in 19:07. This was not Parral's best time as he has a PR of 17:13 for the 5K distance. He shared the interesting story of when he achieved this time. In June, staff from Timber Creek High in Fort Worth had arranged a meet against runners from McFarland High School in California (members of the teams pictured above). McFarland is notable for its succession of 24 CIF Central Section championships in cross-country between 1987 and 2013 and was featured in the movie, *McFarland, USA*. Parral had the privilege of meeting one of the runners from the original team, who is now a coach at the school. This year's meet was a great success and organizers hope to make it an annual even