

Rescheduled 5k fundraiser expects to raise more than \$100,000

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Storms have created headaches for the operators of 90 group homes in New Jersey several times this year. First, the non-profit group Community Options had to pay to relocate many of its developmentally disabled residents to hotels and other locations for up to a week in some areas after superstorm Sandy hit on Oct. 29. Then the organization was forced to twice re-schedule its annual pre-Valentine's Day fundraising 5K race planned in Glen Rock and four other New Jersey towns.

Organizers persevered, and the race went off Saturday, although not quite as planned. Only about half of the more than 300 who registered to run in the race originally planned for Feb. 9 turned up on Saturday. But the event still raised about \$10,000, about \$2,000 more than the targeted goal, thanks to some generous donations from sponsors, said Meredith Quinn, director of the northern New Jersey operations of Community Options.

"When you have to reschedule twice you do lose some people," Quinn said. "But we received a lot of good sponsorships from the community."

Money raised by the Glen Rock race and the four other locations around New Jersey will be used to offset the additional costs the organization incurred having to find temporary accommodations for residents of a vast majority of its homes, including seven in Passaic County and two in Bergen, before and after the storm.

"We were without power in some homes for a week or more," said Svetlana Repic-Quira, regional vice president of Community Options.

The organization gets much of its funding from the state, but also seeks community support and donations. It plans to open another home in Elmwood Park and is also launching a daytime program for 15 to 25 young adults with developmental disabilities in Wayne

The organization expects to raise more than \$100,000 from its 21 "Cupid Chase" events, which took place in eight states – although for the first year, not all on the same date.

The Glen Rock race was among the last to go off, after having been delayed a second time by a poor weather forecast on Feb. 23.

Occurring more than a month after Valentines Day, some runners still got in the spirit, choosing either a red shirt that said "Available" or a white one that said "Unavailable."

"The idea is maybe you can make a love connection," Quinn said.

Two early finishers, Kristen Terzo of Maywood and her T.J. Ciotti of New Paltz, NY., both donned the red shirts.

But the two friends said they were mostly there to challenge themselves to run a faster pace, although Terzo thought the "cupid" theme was cute and that she thought the cause was a good one. "It's good to give yourself an excuse to run for something that's worthwhile like this," Ciotti said.

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