

Cupid's Chase 5K in Mesilla race benefits disabled

By S. Derrickson Moore

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POSTED: 02/08/2014 04:49:52 PM MST

LAS CRUCES >> It was a race for love, and a loving way to help others.

Cupid's Chase 5K participants took off from the Mesilla Plaza Saturday, and it was a motley group that featured teams, kids, family groups, dedicated runners and some enthusiastic sideline cheerleaders.

Perks for racers included everything from trophies and medals to gift bags and opportunities for a potential love connection.

To help cupid fire arrows at the right targets, runners had their choice of "Available" or "Unavailable" T-shirts to wear in the race.

"This is my first race. I wanted to get fit," said Tiffany Aguilera of Las Cruces, racing with her friend Maricela Sandoval.

Team Win Time included Jim and Shelly Coats of Las Cruces, their kids Riley, 10 and Jamie, 13, and family friend Allison Hunt.

"It's my first race. We heard about this at our church, Desert Rivers Community Church, and decided it was a good way to get exercise and help a good cause," Shelly Coats said.

"I just finished my first half-marathon two weeks ago and I really like what this race stands for," Hunt said.

All proceeds go to Community Options, Inc., sponsors of the event. The national nonprofit organization, which provides residential and employment services for people with disabilities, was founded in 1989 and has sponsored the annual Cupid's Chase annual fundraiser since 2009.

Creative costumes added to the fun for some racers, including Amanda Brown and her mom Susan Brown, part of a colorful trio sporting tutus, headbands with bouncing hearts and wild socks, all inspired by the Browns' young racing companion Julianna Diaz, 9.

"It was all Julianna's idea. She started racing a very young age. This is my mother's first race," said Amanda Brown, 28.

Diaz was modest about her costume designs: "I just thought of cupids and how they are so red," she said.

Jose Solis, the event's director, said 330 signed up for the local Cupid's Chase race, up from 289 in the 2013 race [here](#).

About 10,000 were expected to participate nationwide in races held at 24 locations across the United States, doubling last year's participation, according to the website of Community Options, Inc., sponsors of the event. All proceeds go to the national nonprofit organization which provides residential and employment services for people with disabilities. The group started in 1989 and has sponsored the annual Cupid's Chase annual fundraiser since 2009.

The event also featured vendors offering support and health information, music, water and high-five stations throughout the roughly 3-mile course, and Zumba and kickboxing instructors to help contestants warm up before the race.

For information about Community Options programs or the annual race, visit comop.org/cupidschase or Cupid's Chase 5k Run on Facebook.

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