

## FACE PAIN?



### Cupid's Chase 5K run in Glen Rock attracts 153

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Participants in "available" and "not available" shirts at the 5K.

GLEN ROCK — Six months ago, Ellen George and her running buddies would have scoffed at the suggestion that they would complete a 5K run — let alone on a morning when the temperature dipped to 12 degrees.

"None of us could have run from here to [there]," said George, of Hillsdale, pointing to the other side of the parking lot on which she stood.

George was among 153 runners to finish the Cupid's Chase 5K on Saturday morning, one of 28 runs held simultaneously across the country from New Jersey to Arizona.

The roughly 5,000 people registered in those runs have raised more than \$10,000 for Princeton-based non-profit Community Options Inc., which provides housing and employment opportunities for people with developmental disabilities, said race director Meredith Quinn.

Once the 5K got going, the winter chill — made worse by an icy wind — seemed to matter less and less for runners. One man who ran in shorts finished with red calves. Others had Dunkin' Donuts coffee and pastries awaiting them at the finish line on Doremus Avenue.

Spectators in puffy jackets lined the streets, cheering as family and friends crossed the finish line — happy also to retreat into warm cars.

George and her six fellow members of the Couch to 5K running club have been participating in races like this since last fall, when they completed a 10-week beginners session run by North Jersey Masters.

Each Saturday morning since then, their group of 15 — including runners in their mid-20s and one in his 80s — runs for an hour around the Glen Rock duck pond.

Initially, the runners started slowly, one minute walking, one minute running. Then the next session, two minutes walking, two minutes running — and so on. "If you can't keep up, they keep walking with you," George said.

The group is coached by Dominique Hamel of Ridgewood, a runner originally from Canada. "I love motivating people to keep [myself] motivated and sharing that passion with others. It's contagious," she said.

The next 10-week session begins March 21 with a goal of preparing for the annual Ridgewood Run.

At the finish line Saturday, the runners — amateur and seasoned alike — high-fived each another. At the finish, Donna Jean Neill of West Milford said, "I might not have been the fastest, but I feel much better than if I had been sitting on the couch."

Neill works with the North Jersey chapter of Girls on the Run International, a youth development program for elementary- and middle-

school-age girls that culminates in running a 5K. "It empowers young girls," Neill said. "It's about showing them they're beautiful no matter what."

Sisters Kaitlin and Taylor Pani of Franklin Lakes finished the Cupid's Chase 5K for the fourth time, initially inspired to run it after a classroom "Pay it Forward" project. "I think about finishing and picture myself finishing," said 11 year-old Kaitlin. For beginning runners, she advised, "It's not as bad as you think it will be."

Joel Munoz of Garfield finished within 23 minutes, among the top 25 racers to finish. Clad in skintight layers of Under Armour and wearing thin runner's gloves, Munoz shared some tips gleaned from running cross-country and track in high school: Eat a good breakfast and do a "lot of stretching."

A married couple, Brent and Eva Frissora of Manhattan, won the race for the male and female categories, clocking in about 16:20 and 21:27, respectively.

"Take it one step a time," Eva would advise beginners. "And walking is always OK, no matter what. Olympic runners have their days when they walk, too."

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