

Large group enjoys Walpole's 24th Village Fair Road Race

By Keith Lewis

Wicked Local Walpole

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WALPOLE — The record number of entrants in the annual Village Fair Road Race (259) fell into long-time event director Jim Logan's lap, in a manner of speaking.

Getting an encouraging number of entrants, and expecting the usual last-minute race day sign-ups, Logan was delighted to have a group of about 50 newcomers sign up en masse a few weeks prior.

The group included a number of patients, staff and supporters of the Surgical Weight Loss Specialists, a company affiliated with Norwood Caritas Hospital that has been in the process of moving from Norwood to roomier digs in Walpole.

While there were a couple of no-shows, almost 50 of the group still arrived on a rainy morning to either run or walk in the 5K race, and with the gang all wearing green tee-shirts with the motto "Band on the Run" across the front, they all finished.

Logan was so delighted to have this group – most of which had never run a road race before – that he joined them on a training run that was a tour of the race course before Saturday's actual event.

Entertaining these gracious guests was only one of the highlights of the race, which was won for a second straight time by Dan O'Connell of Medfield, who was chased to the finish for the second straight time by former Walpole High track star Phil Gingras.

O'Connell made a nice stab at the course record of 15:16 set by Kevin Gray of Walpole in 2003, but conditions weren't ideal and won in 15:32. Gingras followed in 15:52 and third place went to another former Walpole High track runner, Eric Flaman, who covered the course in a personal best time of 16:55.

Rounding out the top five were Chris Smith of Woburn (17:10), back for a second time, and Walpole track captain-elect Justin Connolly, covering the course in 17:23.

There were a couple of interesting sidelights to the race.

One was the appearance of former Wellesley High and Boston College star Brielle Chabot who pushed relentlessly and beat the next closest woman – Walpole field hockey player Amanda Waldron – by almost two minutes. What neither the two-time all-scholastic nor anyone else was aware of was how close she was to the course record, as her 17:32 clocking ended up just a second behind the 17:31 run by former All-American Emily Logan in 2005.

"I told them it wasn't my fault," joked race director Logan of his daughter's notoriety being preserved for at least one more year. Chabot was chased by the usual local contingent, including Una Corrigan, Jen Egan and Maureen Larkin, as well as recently graduated Walpole High runners Brigette Lawton and Liz Jeloe. The pair did pretty well finishing seventh and eighth among all women after just competing in the state heptathlon championships a couple of days earlier.

The other sidelight was also a surprise. Before starting the race surgical weight loss Specialists Dietician Jane Silvestre, who organized the group's participation, left nine-year-old daughter Sara in the care of her mother, Sylvia Perreault of Woonsocket, Rhode Island.

Unexpectedly Sara jumped into the race, and Sylvia followed, trying to keep up.

"I asked her to stay with my daughter," explained Silvestre, herself a former high school and college track runner who now runs marathons. "I didn't know she was going to run. My mother ended up winning her age group trying to keep up with her."

"Jane started running when she was nine, so I guess it's to be expected," said Perreault, who recently retired. "She was fast. She ran out and took off her jacket, and ran all the way back to me and gave me the jacket. Then she took off again. I kept trying to keep up, and was surprised when she announced my name. Who would think that my first road race I'd win?"

Perreault, a good-natured lady, saw the humor in the episode. "I told Dr. Glasgow 'she's the runner of the family, but take note of who has the medal.'"

Dr. Adam Glasgow is how all this got started. The doctor and his father, Dr. Arthur Glasgow, started the clinic in 2005 as a means to treat patients needing drastically to lose weight. Their method, a laparoscopic technique, involves placing lap bands around their stomachs, negating the need for stomach cutting, stapling or intestinal rerouting.

But treatment also involves regular checkups and adherence to exercise and diet regimens. That led to the idea of doing the road races, an idea that went over well.

"I've run one race before," said patient Katie Pavento of Milford, who has lost 70 pounds. "This was my second one, and I'm turning into a jogging junkie. I'm doing another one in September and another in October.

"The atmosphere was just so unbelievable. Jim Logan took us aside prior to let us know how proud of us he was. What kept me going was a woman I know from the office was ahead of me and I thought maybe someone behind me was saying the same thing. All the green shirts kept me focused too."

Another happy participant was Susan Needle of Walpole, who says she's lost 100 pounds with the clinic's help.

"I didn't run, I walked a fair amount," said Needle. "I'm an avid walker and did it to support the group. I said I'd do it in 45 minutes, and I did it in 39. I'm doing this one next year, too."

For complete race results visit www.coolrunning.com or villagefair5k.com, and those interested to learn more about the clinic and lap band procedures may visit www.massweightloss.com.

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