

30th Annual Fairfield Road Race a success

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By Elizabeth Connors

Early Sunday morning, as the sun was just coming up over the water, Jennings Beach was brimming with life as over 3,000 runners prepared for the 30th annual Stratton Faxon Fairfield Road Race for local charities. In addition to the runners, sponsors, including the Fairfield Fire Dept., the Stratton Faxon Law Firm, Optimum, Crystal Rock and 95.9 FOX radio station, set up booths and tables along the beach. Runners and supporters alike were able to mix and mingle on the beach while live music played before the race started.

As early as 6:30 a.m., volunteers were in full swing, checking people in, handing out t-shirts and preparing food and water for after the race. Among the booths set up for check-in was the Fairfield Police/Fire Division who started the race 30 years ago with the goal of producing a national caliber sporting event and donating the money proceeds to local charities. This year, 17 runners from the Fairfield Fire Dept. participated in the race, as well as members of various fire departments from New York City, Westchester County, and even as far as California.

But that's not the farthest distance people have come from to participate in the event. Runners from Ethiopia, Kenya, and Kazakhstan were in attendance this year to run both the 5K and the half-marathon races throughout town.

The charities represented included The American Cancer Society, The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, and The John Patrick Flanagan Foundation, a local foundation established in memory of Fairfield resident John Flanagan, who passed away on Christmas Eve, 2008 of cancer. Their mission is to support charities that provide direction, education and healthy environment to vulnerable children and families in need.

About 120 runners represented the foundation in the race. In a tent on the beach handing out shamrock green shirts with the phrase "Run Strong" in Gaelic printed on the back, John's brother-in-law, Christopher Riley said they raised close to \$30,000 at this year's race.

"The race is a great way for family and friends to come together outside. It's the kind of thing John loved," said Riley. John's wife, Amanda, is the chairperson of the foundation and Riley sits on the board.

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