

Running for Awareness

About 160 people came out for the Kathryn M. Freeman Race for Ovarian Cancer, which includes a half marathon and a five-mile walk.



Sarah Vandine and Benjamin Bricker, both from Mechanicsburg, run through Loyalsock Riverfront Park.
Photo courtesy of Kimberly Freeman

by Kimberly Freeman
Community contributor

The Kathryn M. Freeman Race For Ovarian Cancer, sponsored by Jersey Shore State Bank, took place on Nov. 2 in South Williamsport. The event was created in memory of Kathryn Freeman, a longtime resident of the Williamsport area, who passed away from ovarian cancer in January 2010.

One hundred thirty-one half-marathoners started in South Williamsport Community Park and ran along the Susquehanna River Walk, through the Borough of South Williamsport, the City of Williamsport and Loyalsock Township.

In addition to the half marathon, the event hosted a five-mile walk with approximately 30 participants.

Stephen Hine from Philadelphia, Pa., was the first male finisher, with a time of 1:17:41.14, followed by Tyler Welsh from Washingtonville, Pa., at 1:20:07.31 and JT Thomas from Stewartstown, Pa., at 1:22:33.82.

Tamara Pavlov from Lewisburg, Pa., topped the women's field for the second year in a row, finishing at 1:27:28.45. In second, Heather Welsh from Washingtonville, Pa., finished with a time of 1:29:37.66, followed by Julie Pentico from Williamsport with a time of 1:35:02.61.

The event was fortunate enough to have two ovarian cancer survivors participate in the five-mile River Walk. Rita Irish from Broadview Heights, Ohio, and Georgena Smith from Danville, Pa., came out and demonstrated their resilience, bringing their ovarian cancer

battles to the attention of the Susquehanna Valley.

Rita Irish made the trip up from Ohio for the 2011 and 2012 race as well, as there are not any events dedicated to ovarian cancer in her area.

Many race participants walked or ran in honor of not only these women, but also loved ones fighting ovarian cancer or loved ones who lost their fight with the disease. All race participants and volunteers received shirts that displayed the names of women affected by the disease.

Race organizers were pleased with the increase in race volunteers for the 2013 race.

Students from Loyalsock Township High School and South Williamsport High School, as well as many other area residents who simply wanted to help, demonstrated their commitment to community service, dedicating their Saturday to supporting and encouraging participants.

Many ovarian cancer symptoms are vague and go undiagnosed or misdiagnosed, allowing for the cancer to reach advanced stages.

As there is not a reliable screening test, it is important that women are aware of the symptoms, so they can have informed conversations with their doctors.

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Race organizers want women to know that they cannot take a back seat when it comes to their health.

They should be aware of their bodies and encourage more forums to discuss health issues.

Proceeds from the race benefited the Susquehanna Health Foundation.

Participants set up fundraising pages that raised money for Susquehanna Health Foundation on behalf of their Spirit of Women program, which empowers women to take charge of their own health.

The 2012 race raised more than \$17,500. Race organizers were still tallying fundraising efforts from this year's race, but they hope to build on last year's efforts and continue their collaboration with Susquehanna Health.



Debra Portzline from Williamsport crosses the finish line.
Photo courtesy of Kimberly Freeman

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—Kimberly Freeman

RUNNERS TOP FINISHERS

The half marathon included 131 runners, and the accompanying five-mile walk had about 30 participants.

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Tell us what you

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Participants (Rita Irish and Georgena Smith with teal boas) leave the start line in South Williamsport Community Park.
Photo courtesy of Kimberly Freeman