

Fast fathers

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BEVERLY SHORES — With the Mother's Day annual brunch last month, it was time to dig out the running shoes for the Father's Day run celebration.

On Saturday morning, sons, fathers, grandfathers and other loved male family members gathered on Beverly Shore Drive for the ninth annual Necktie 5k Walk and Run.

Donned in running shorts and neckties, runners from all over northwest Indiana and eight different states enjoyed a fast, and a little hilly course along Lake Michigan.

Race Director Curt Kendall, of Michigan City, led the speedy runners throughout the 3.1 miles on his bike, then welcomed runners - from age four to age 78 - into the finish line. The race was timed by THT timing, from Valparaiso.

"This has been the best weather ever," Kendall said.

There were about 400 racers, Kendall said, a mix of familiar and new faces.

"I met a family from Indianapolis who has been to this race five years in a row," he exclaimed. "People do this race over and over. There are a lot of locals."

Kendall invited runners and walkers of all speeds and ages to race, inviting strollers and father-daughter and -son teams to compete.

"We had a significantly higher amount of family teams and strollers," he said laughing. "I have seen a lot of strollers."

The race awards were given to the top three places in the age group, male and female, however, Kendall added a few more fun awards to the race. Recognition was given to the best and unique tie worn by a runner and the top father-daughter and father-son team were announced.



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Runners take off during the Necktie 5k Run. The race began on Beverly Shores Drive and looped through the town of Beverly Shores.

Several names were called for their fun ties, some featuring the wearer's children's faces on it, one was Christmas inspired and one man wore so many his 3.1 mile run felt a lot heavier and hotter than the others.

The tie outfits, which were the most unique, were worn by Amanda and Brooke Skalka from Westville.

With the Skalka men cheering them on, the team ran in a dress outfit fashioned from old ties.

"We have been doing this race for the last five years," Amanda Skalka said, though it was her daughter's first time.

The outfit was made by a friend of the family who is in college for design.

"She bought the ties from Goodwill and made them for us to wear!" Skalka added.

Winning the last four years together was the father-daughter team of Nicole, 31, and David Hartford, 55, of Chesterton.

The duo ran in 21 minutes and 59 seconds, she winning her age group and him placing second in his.

The father-son winners were Tyce and Brian Custy. Brian, 37, ran with his seven-year-old son to finish in a little more than 26 minutes.

The overall winner was Andy Weber, 20, from Chicago. A cross-country athlete for George Washington University, Weber said the course was great for such a small, local race.

Weber finished in 16:32, not a personal best overall, but for this race, a long-awaited accomplishment.

"I have raced here about six times and have been in second for the last four years," he said. "This was my first victory here. That was my goal."

His family spends the summer in their house in Michigan City, allowing Weber to train throughout the roads and trails of Beverly Shores often.

"It is such a good environment," he added, gesturing to the smooth water of the lake in front of him.

Also, a summer-time visitor each year was the overall female winner, Grace Voelz.

Voelz, 15, runs for her New Palestine school, but in the summer attends the Necktie run to race with her family and uncle, who has a house in the area, she said.

"It was hot," she said, after finishing in 19th place overall in 21:49. "I love the hills though."

Other first place, male and female winners include: Tyce Custy and Everly Pvcraft age 1-7; Luke Sparks and Julia Sherpitas age 8-9; Myles Aerts and Ally Sena age 10-11; Eric Sparks and Julia Benes age 12-14; Sam Voelz and Emma Keene age 15-19; Brendan Loftus and Caroline Voelz age 20-24; Kevin Scott and Ali Olson age 25-29; Adam Sauder and Nicole Hartford age 30-34; John Bohling and Perihan Nadzaku age 35-39; Jeff Kasal and Tracy Sterling age 40-44; Scott Drlik and Audrey Benes age 45-49; Brian Fudacz and Mary Stump age 50-54; Phil Sullivan and Kelly Sweeney age 55-59; Mick Ferrantella and Kathy Hilbrich age 60-64; Ken Hyde and Carol Westbrook age 65-69; Norm Eikman and Gunnbjorg Lavoll age 70-74 and Bill Carstedt age 75-79.