

Annual triathlon event draws hundreds to Point

Athletes hit the water on Saturday at the annual Kid's Triathlon in Point Pleasant. The event began with a swim in the Manasquan River [above], and included a run [next photo] and biking on marked trails throughout Riverfront Park. *Photo by SUEANNE GOSS, STAR NEWS GROUP*



Treasure Island Triathlon series raises nearly \$6,000 for Point Pleasant schools

By Erica Florentine

October 2, 2009

POINT PLEASANT — Racers took to the streets and hit the water this past weekend, at the town's annual Treasure Island Triathlon event. The weekend brought hundreds of locals — and not-so-locals — to Point Pleasant, for two days of competitions.

The weekend's events are part of an annual tradition, organized by the Point Pleasant Foundation for Excellence in Education [PPFEE], that has been racing through the town for the past six years. The group works to support the needs of Point Pleasant's four schools.

Saturday marked the start of the series of races. At 5 p.m., children gathered at Riverfront Park, on the Manasquan River, to compete against their peers in a swim, bike and run. According to PPFEE President Regina Foley, 112 children registered for the event. She noted that this number has grown a lot since last year, when 70 children participated in the race.

"Everyone received finisher medals," Ms. Foley said. "There were also gold, silver and bronze medals for males and females." Ms. Foley said children from all across the state came to participate in the event. Some came from out of state, as well. "We had children from Point Pleasant, Brick, Jackson, Toms River and even as far out as Pennsylvania," she said.

The children's portion of the triathlon included different age categories, so participants were matched with other children of similar physical ability. For the Kid's Triathlon, the race cost \$20. Participants aged 7 and 8, and those in 9- and 10-year-old group, swam 100 yards, biked .8 miles, and ran .6 miles.

Participants aged 11 and 12, and ones in the group of 13- and 14-year-olds, swam 200 yards, biked 1.75 miles, and ran 1.25 miles. "We want to expose them to a multi-sport event, and it gives them good experience," Ms. Foley said.

She said the Kid's Triathlon would not have been such a success without the help of volunteers from throughout the Point Pleasant community. Ms. Foley specifically mentioned the Jersey

Shore Triathlon Club, which she said was helpful in the water. Also there to help were the New Jersey Marine Police, the Coast Guard, municipal workers, and Point Pleasant Police and First Aid. "The community comes together to have a nice, safe event," Ms. Foley said. She said a lot of support also comes from Point Pleasant High School. Volunteer groups from the school, including Leo Club and Interact, send members to assist in the day's races.

Also, players from the high school's freshman football team came to lend a helping hand. Ms. Foley said the teammates, all wearing their jerseys, and the other volunteers from the school gave out water to the athletes and assisted in the setup and cleanup involved in the event. She said their community spirit was great.

"I find students to be magical," she noted.

Of those in attendance at the children's triathlon were parents, siblings and friends of the racers, according to Ms. Foley. "There was a lot of energy from the crowd," she said.

The race took an average of 20 to 30 minutes for the children to complete. In addition to receiving a medal for finishing the triathlon, participants were also given a free black and gold T-shirt from the PPFEE, which Ms. Foley said the children wore proudly.

Ms. Foley said the courses for the races were mapped out by the event's coordinator, her husband, Dave Johnson. With the use of large signs, the pathways were marked out clearly for the racers.

As for the adults, there were two separate races that took place on Sunday morning at Riverfront Park. One included a swim, bike and run, and the other was a kayak, bike and run. In total 280 people participated in these races.

The swim triathlon began at 8:45 a.m. Ms. Foley said the foundation chose to begin the race at this time to allow for the athletes to experience "slack tide," or calm waters. This race had participants swimming 600 meters, biking 10.5 miles, and running 3 miles. Early registration for the traditional sprint triathlon event was \$60. An additional \$10 was added for those registering the day of the event.

Ms. Foley said the swimmers began their race first, and went sent off in three different heats, in order to allow for some space in the river. The kayak race did not begin until all of the swimmers were out of the water, for safety purposes. "Dave is very conscientious about waiting until all swimmers are out of the water before letting the next race begin," Ms. Foley said.

The kayak triathlon was the PPFEE's original triathlon race. Six years ago, the foundation began the tradition by allowing people to go up against each other, by kayaking 1.5 miles, biking 10.5 miles, and then running 3 miles. The kayak race's early registration fee was \$45 for an individual, \$60 for a two-person team, and \$75 for a three-person team. An additional \$10 was added, for those signing up later.

The kayak triathlon preceded the first series of races. Ms. Foley said throughout all of the races, there were no reported injuries, and no kayaks turned over. Ms. Foley said a real boon to the PPFEE with this weekend's triathlons was the use of the newly-completed Riverfront Park.

"The venue was spectacular," Ms. Foley said.

She said the event proved successful, also, thanks to the neighbors surrounding the park. She said they were all supportive and helpful throughout the weekend. An estimated \$6,000 was raised during the triathlon weekend. As of yet, the foundation has not decided what the money will specifically be used for. Ms. Foley said the group hopes to continue to build the funds and work together with the schools' administrators to determine what the money should be put toward.

In the past, the Foundation for Excellence in Education has contributed new equipment, such as playground equipment and a Project Adventure high ropes course, to the school. Also, the group has purchased new technology for Point Pleasant schools, including mobile computer labs and a weather station, according to Ms. Foley.

The Point Pleasant Foundation for Excellence in Education is a 501[c]3 not-for-profit organization. It has been in existence for the past 13 years and has raised and donated over \$327,500 to the Point Pleasant School District.

Organizers for the event could not provide a list of winners from the Kid's Triathlon by press time. For a complete list of the top finishers in each of the adult triathlon races, see sidebar, page XX.