

KOGO AND MANDEFRO CAPTURE 10 TH PVI RUNFEST 5K

By George Banker

It has taken 10 years to develop a community and school based running event which has incorporated values of the school while maintaining a competitive atmosphere. Each participant enjoyed a sense of personal satisfaction. Race Director, Ed Zigo has managed to steer the Paul VI Runfest 5K of Fairfax, Virginia to the most competitive 5K in Northern Virginia. The committee is composed of friends and parents of students all with a mutual goal, the delivery a well executed event. The race elected to provide quality to the runners over quantity of runners.

The 10th anniversary race was held on Sunday, September 20, 2009 at Paul VI High School. Each year the race has managed to be socially responsible by benefiting local programs. In the 10 year history the race has managed to raise well over \$100,000 for a number of great causes..... most notably the nationally recognized and award winning **Paul VI Options Program**, which mainstreams special needs students within the high school.

The students enjoy a more complete experience through the hard work of a wonderfully talented staff and literally hundreds of students who volunteer as Peer Mentors. The students participate in sports, Special Olympics and all other school events. For more insight on Options, go to <http://www.paulvi.net/academics/options.html>.

Another beneficiary of the event was the organization **Life with Cancer**. Life with Cancer's missions is to "Enhance the quality of life of those affected by cancer supporting, providing, helping, assisting, collaborating and educating people with cancer and their loved ones from diagnosis through treatment and, when necessary, at the end of life and during times of bereavement. For more information, go to <http://www.inova/healthcare-services/life-with-cancer-program/index.jsp>.

The school yard at Paul VI High School was all about the business of racing at its best. The international field had runners from Ethiopia and Kenya which adds excitement along with the local elite runners. The USATF certified two-loop course offered the benefit of keeping an eye on the competition. The opening mile had a pack of five runner's shoulder-to-shoulder all capable of being the winner but there would only be one. The top runners were going after a share of the \$4,900 in cash prize money for the open and master athletes.

The male leaders included Ethiopian runners Demesse Tefera, Abiyot Abebe, Stephen Mukuthi Mutisya. The Kenyan representatives were Kipyegon Kirui and Julius Kipkoech Kogo. Returning champion Ray Pugsley of Potomac River Running is now a master. In 2000 the first year Pugsley was the overall winner with a time of 14:55 and to date it ranks as the 14th fastest time and is the only American. Guy Alton of Richmond, Va., was in the mix to push the pace.

The leading females included Kenyan runner Hellen Jemutai along with Ethiopian runners Hirut Mandefro and Yihunilish Delelicha. The top Americans included Kristi Markowitz, Laurel Jefferson and Danielle Russell.

Into the second loop the stage was being set for a race to the finish as the leaders were down to three. Kogo was getting down to the business of running as he made a move which others attempted to cover. The schoolyard was in sight as Kogo dropped to another gear to secure the

\$400 first place award with a time of 14:29. The open record was set in 2003 by Mohammed Amyn of Morocco with a time of 13:54. In the history of the race only two runners have gone under 14 minutes with the other being the runner David Kipnetich of Kenya with a 13:55.

Kirui was second with a time of 14:32 (\$300) and third was Tefera with 14:37 (\$200). In fourth place was Abiyot Abebe with 14:53 (\$100) followed by Stephen Mukuthi Mutisya with 14:54 (\$50).

The first American for the second year was Guy Alton of Richmond, Va., with a time of 15:15. Last year Alton ran 15:12. The fastest American winning time has been 14:40 by Steve Meinelt of Arlington, Va., in 2006.

The cash awards were the same for the females. There was a race to the wire for the females as Hellen Jemutai was giving chase to Hirut Mandefro in the closing mile. The finish was down to leg speed as Mandefro proved to be the stronger runner to claim first place with a 16:26. The record was set last year by Alemgena Desta of Ethiopia with a 16:16. Desta was the winner in 2006 with a 16:45. Ethiopian runners have won first place five out of the 10 years.

In recognition of support to the PVI Runfest two awards were added the Lea Gallardo Cup which was awarded to the first female overall and the George Banker Cup to the first male overall. Gallardo was the owner of the former Metro Run and Walk Running Store. Banker has supported the race in variety of areas. There is a plaque which is located in the school and each year the winner's names will be added.

Returning to capture glory was Ray Pugsley as a mark was made in the master's ranks. Pugsley dominated the division by placing seventh place overall with 15:20 (second fastest master winning time) and he collected \$200. There will only be one first time winner. Pugsley has been the only American overall winner. The master record was set in 2006 by Albert Okemwa of Kenya with a 15:07. There have been only five master runners under 16 minutes.

Andrew Duncan of Washington was runner up with 16:08 to collect \$100. Greg Cauller of York, Pa., was third with 17:05 (\$75). Cauller was the runner up master in 2007 (16:43).

Joel Blackstone was fourth master in 17:16 (\$50).

Dave Berardi of Baltimore, Md., was fifth master with 17:17 (\$50). Berardi has history with PVI as a fixture in the running community. In 2001 Berardi placed third master (15:56), 2002 second place (16:14). The first master position was captured in 2003 (16:26). He captured runner in 2005 (16:30) and 2006 (16:43). In 2007, a third place finish (16:53).

The top female master was Danielle Russell of Team Brooks clocked 18:14 (fourth fastest winning time) and placed sixth. The record was set in 2006 (17:27) by Alisa Harvey of Manassas, Va. Harvey has been the only master under 18 minutes. Harvey was the female winner at the first PVI Runfest in 2000 (17:36).

Linda Foley of Oak Hill, Va., was the runner up with a 19:30. Foley was runner up in 2007 (19:28) and in 2008 (19:38).

The third master was Anita Freres of Reston, Va., with a 19:56. Joann Buns was fourth master with a 20:53 followed by Alison Suckling of Arnold, Md., with a 21:30.

A consistent runner and friend of the PVI Runfest is Dan Lawson of Team Saucony. In 2002 Lawson placed first in the age group 45-49 (16:25). In the age group 50-54 Lawson has taken first place in 2006 (17:13), 2007 (17:13), 2008 (17:13), and 2009 (17:35).

The top faculty honors were claimed by teachers Audrey Joyner (25:49) and Billy Emerson (28:49).