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South Elgin 5K/10K to benefit shelter, seniors' pets



Runners take off at a previous RunFurShelter, a 5K/10K fundraiser with proceeds benefiting shelter animals and companion pets of seniors. This year's run takes place on Sunday, May 22 in South Elgin.

Brian Hill | Staff Photographer

By Stefanie Dell'Aringa
Daily Herald correspondent

Several years ago, three women from South Elgin who met at a gym decided to organize a 5K race and donate all the money to animal shelters and rescue efforts.

Over the years, Tanya Esquivel, Nancy Meaney and Sara Johnson have raised over \$100,000. On Sunday, May 22, they're hoping to raise another \$25,000 to \$30,000 at the sixth annual RunFurShelter 5K/10K Race. The race takes place at Advocate Sherman Immediate Care Center, 2000 McDonald Road (at the corner of Randall and McDonald Roads) in South Elgin.

"It starts at the immediate care center, and runs through the Thornwood subdivision," said Esquivel, event director. "It's

scenic and flat and very runner-friendly."

The popular race draws about 500 runners, including students from Corron Elementary School in South Elgin. Elementary grade school students pay a discounted registration fee of \$20.

"We've had up to 20 kids running and what's really kind of cool is that they bring their parents with them," Esquivel said. "It's really turned into something that we're very proud of."

Forming partnerships with schools and businesses such as the Animal Care Clinic in South Elgin has enabled the nonprofit organization to provide food, shelter and discounted veterinary care for pets in the Fox Valley area. The ladies saw a need after reading an article about the Salvation Army's Golden Diners program. Some of the clients in the program couldn't afford pet food.

"About four years ago, we found out that seniors were giving their food to their pets instead of feeding themselves," explained Ken Madden, director of the Salvation Army Golden Diners program. "We decided to partner with RunFurShelter to be able to purchase pet food and veterinary care for the seniors' pets because pets are a major source of well-being and companionship for them."

Golden Diners serves 1,000 clients per day in Kane and McHenry counties.

"We're the only Meals-on-Wheels program in those two counties," Madden said.

Madden plans to participate in the 5K race.

"Hopefully my wife and 1-year-old son can make it out as well," said Madden. "We want to support the program and all the runners."

Runners pay \$35 for preregistration or \$40 on the day of the race to participate in either the 5K or 10K race, which is chipped and timed by a professional company. The South Elgin Police Department will assist with traffic and safety, and food and water will be provided for the runners. A face painter, juggler and pirate will be on hand to entertain children and adults.

"Nancy Meaney puts on a party with her races," said longtime participant Maureen Kremer of South Elgin. "It's the most fun you'll have running. They play good loud music, and there's a pirate at the end of the race greeting you."

Kremer plans to run the 5K with her 7-year-old daughter, Julia and 9-year-old son, Matt. "Since we live in Thornwood, it's so convenient and it's just such a great cause," she said.

Besides the registration fees, additional money is raised through local businesses who sponsor the race and set up booths to promote their companies on race day. Last year, Banfield Pet Hospital, Village Squire Restaurant and Visiting Angels Living Assistance Services were among the generous contributors.

The race would not be possible without the help of over 100 volunteers who serve on committees. Race director's assistant Jody Reiter of Elgin arranged for Marines to be in attendance on race day. They'll conduct a flag ceremony.

"Newly enlisted poolees will be there in representation for the Marines," said Reiter, who is a Marine mom. "I'm proud and honored to have the Marines represented at the race."

Lance Corporal Sam Perez will be there saluting the flag and the poolees will be standing at attention during the national anthem.

While the race benefits pets, they are not allowed to participate in the race due to safety concerns.

Esquivel wants to encourage any walkers, including moms with strollers, to participate in either race.

"It's really a fun family event and besides the 5K and 10K, we have a 100-meter sprint for kids and that's \$5," said Esquivel. "Everyone who participates in the sprint will receive a ribbon."

The 10K race begins at 7:45 a.m. and the 5K starts at 8 a.m. Online registration is available until Tuesday, May 17. The first 100 online registrants will receive a Dri-FIT long-sleeved shirt in place of the regular race day T-shirt.

More information is available at [runfurshelter.com](http://www.runfurshelter.com) (<http://www.runfurshelter.com>) or by calling Esquivel at (224) 805-3722.

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