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Colleges, Individuals Take to Streets for Via



Bruce Keele of Bridgewater, N.J., raises his hands in triumph after completing the 26.2-mile Lehigh Valley Health Network Marathon for Via.

Photo by Steve Andreas

the totals won't be official until the end of September.

Winners of the Via College Cup were the Lapping Leopards "A" team from Lafayette College, Easton. A team of five from Lehigh University, Bethlehem, finished the marathon in four hours, placing 128th and clocking in at 4:02:05.

However, the main focus of the Via College Cup was not to win but to get as many faculty members away from their desks and the glare of neon, and into the open for a worthwhile cause. Spearheading the College Cup was Paul Pierpoint, LVHN Marathon chairperson and dean of Northampton Community College's Southside Campus.

Pierpoint says that the local colleges and universities have a major impact in a number of areas, including economically,

By STEVE ANDRES

Special to Lehigh Valley Source

Runners from colleges and universities across the Lehigh Valley took to the streets on Sunday, Sept. 13, 2009, for the inaugural Via College Cup, which was part of the Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN) Marathon to benefit Via of the Lehigh Valley.

"From the very young to the very old, and everybody in between, we [Via] provide[s] services and support for people with disabilities," says Lisa Walkiewicz, Via communications director.

Joining the schools in the LVHN Marathon were individuals and corporations, all competing in the event, either running or walking. It was a successful turnout, easily surpassing last year's total.

"The participation level has been outstanding" says Walkiewicz. "We had more than 2,000 runners registered this year. We're close to a thousand more runners than we had last year."

The third-year event drew a number of runners from outside Pennsylvania, says Walkiewicz, noting that the influx means a boon to the local economy.

"They're not just staying one day to run the race," said Walkiewicz. "They're going to all these [other] events around the Lehigh Valley—which is great for the Lehigh Valley."

Via's goal was to raise more money than last year's \$90,000. This year's marathon exceeded that mark, says Walkiewicz, noting that

culturally, and socially, making it a natural fit for their participation.

“It’s the one event for every college and university—from the community colleges to Lehigh to Penn State—in which we can all compete,” says Pierpoint. “We can all hang in there to be together.”

When Pierpoint originally floated the idea for the College Cup, the schools were “pumped,” he says. Participation demonstrates the colleges’ level of community engagement, he says, and taps into the competitive spirit of the schools by leading to bragging rights. He challenged each school to field five teams, with each team sporting runners to compete in the marathon relay.

Pierpoint began his association with Via as a volunteer. His involvement has grown over the years, an association he describes as “fun.”

“It’s been a great experience,” he says.

For more results from the marathon, visit Via’s Web site at www.vianet.org.

Steve Andres is a freelance writer.



Laura Barany of Harmony, N.J., finishes her leg of the relay as she competes in the LVHN marathon for Via. The race, which began in Allentown and wound along the Lehigh River Canal towpath, also featured half-marathoners and walkers.

Meredith Longo (left) of Allentown and Brenda Keim of Bethlehem finished second in the corporate women’s division. The pair, who laced them up for Olympus, finished with a 3:45:23 mark.



Distributing medals to all racers were volunteers Kathy and Dick Ryan of Easton.



Live music was part of the finish festival that dotted downtown Easton

during the race.

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