

Morgan Hill Times

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Rain clears for runners



Scott Hinrichs

More than 740 runners were on their marks for the 35th annual Wildflower Run Sunday, March 25. The run, hosted by the American Academy of University Women (AAUW), began and ended at Live Oak High School in northeast Morgan Hill and is the group's largest annual fundraiser providing scholarships to women and young girls, as well as community action grants.

The event, which first began in 1984 and only included women and young girls, now boasts multiple races for women, men, children—even dads with strollers can get into the lineup which includes a 2K, 5K and 10K in various arrangements.

Past run director and AAUW publicity chair Elizabeth Mandel said building community is one thing the AAUW has sought to reinforce over the four decades since the event began.

“Like adding a stroller event, adding a senior event,” Mandel said. “We do things that don’t give us as much profit—we gave out medals to all the 2K children runners.”

The Morgan Hill Photography Club, which Mandel said is very active in its support of local nonprofits, provided free photography services. Their photos are downloadable from the wildflowerrun.org website.

Mandel said this year they added music performances including local students, Taiko drummers from the Morgan Hill Taiko group Sandoshin Taiko and local ukulele players, LukeS, with the Library Ukulele Society of Morgan Hill.

“I think it’s sort of part of the flavor of Morgan Hill,” she said. “It’s a community-minded place. The musicians are a piece of that.”

This run earned well-needed funds, but beyond that, Mandel wants to remind the community there are many ways to participate.

“The thing to keep in mind is there’s the registration, the corporate sponsorship and the individual donations,” she said. “We’re hoping that combination will still enable us to produce the same support.”

In all, the group will raise more than \$50,000, said run director Pat Toombs. After paying permit fees to the city, the school and the county, they’ll have enough to maintain their current giving process.

“We’ll be easily (able) to turn around 50K and put it back into the local community into our scholarships and various missions,” Toombs said.

Toombs highlighted the AAUW contributions to the community as one of the best parts of their work. “We also do the community action groups,” she added. “Learning and Loving Education Center supplies for ESL classes, we did a mariachi music program for San Martin Gwinn Elementary School, and we also did the Discovery Council Center youth mentoring for elementary school students. Those are some of the local ways that we give back in addition to all the scholarships.”

Interested sponsors and prospective members can learn more at wildflowerrun.org.