

Nonprofit profile: Wildflower run spreads seeds of empowerment

by [Donna Lane](#) | Mar 15, 2019

Mother of triplets aims to break 10K stroller run world record

Published in the March 20 – April 2, 2019 issue of Gilroy Life and March 27 - April 9 issue of Morgan Hill Life

As wildflowers dot the local hillsides the morning of March 31, Ann Marie Cody will attempt to set the 10K stroller run world record at the annual AAUW Wildflower Run.

More than 1,000 runners of all ages will converge at Morgan Hill's Live Oak High School to participate in a fitness event that raises funds for scholarships and other programs supporting equity and education for women and girls. The Wildflower Run is a South Valley tradition now in its 36th year. This all-volunteer event supports the American Association of University Women, which focuses on advocacy, research, education, and philanthropy to empower females.

Cody works as an astronomer and researcher at NASA. She has previously held the records for stroller running with her two-year-old triplets in the half-marathon and marathon distances. "But I have two certificates and three kids," she said. "So, I thought I should try for a third."

It's a labor of love for Cody, who couldn't run for a while after the birth of her triplets, two boys and a girl lovingly referred to as the Triple Viking Clan, due to her husband's Norwegian heritage. She'd read about a woman setting the Guinness world record for stroller running at an event that raised funds for charity — and something clicked.



Anne Marie Cody with her triplets after a marathon in March of last year

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- Ann Marie Cody,
Wildflower Run participant

“I used to do trail and mountain running,” she said. “But I can't haul three children up a mountain. So, we acquired this enormous stroller. I needed to get exercise. And we found the movement induced naps. And I loved the idea of it being tied to fundraising. I started running again and really enjoyed it.” Cody had never run a half marathon with or without a stroller, but she found herself doing something that was fun, healthy, and involved her children, all while enjoying time outdoors. “It's kind of a riot,” she said. She laughed, describing how silly it must have looked to haul three babies in a stroller while

running a distance most people couldn't do without any added challenges. “People would be cheering us on.” Though her previous records in the half and full marathon have been broken, she's eager to see if she can beat the current record of 49:17 for the 10K at the Wildflower Run. Her triplets are getting heavier, so in addition to running, she's begun adding strength training and core training to her workouts. But even if she doesn't break the record, she's excited to help a good cause. Previously, she has done stroller running to raise funds for the

newborn intensive care unit at El Camino Hospital, where her children spent about a month after their birth, and Project Sweet Peas, which helps families with children in NICUs nationwide.

“Most races aren’t for charity,” Cody said. “But AAUW is about women with a higher level of education, and I like to support others in that endeavor. It’s hard to balance family, your personal life, work, and education. We need to make those things work.”

Like wildflowers, scholarships and programs for girls and women plant the seeds for greater achievements in life. AAUW’s Morgan Hill branch offers educational opportunities, leadership development, fun and fellowship. They award scholarships to local graduating seniors as well as women attending college. They also provide grants to previous scholarship winners and engage with the local community. AAUW aims to break through educational and economic barriers so that all women and girls have a fair chance.

Sponsored by the Morgan Hill chapter of AAUW, the Wildflower Run features a variety of courses: 2K, 5K, and 10K. The 2K race takes place on the Live Oak High School track and has special divisions for kids and seniors. The 5K and 10K events cover scenic, local back roads and are flat and fast.

To keep up the pace, there will be entertainment along the way. Previous year’s performers have included taiko drummers, guitar players, dancers, and a ukulele group. Hundreds of volunteers, including community leaders, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts, make the Wildflower Run possible. Registration is limited to 1,200 participants.

It takes lots of strength to push a stroller with three children. It’s an even greater challenge to do it while running and trying to set a new world record. But for Ann Marie Cody and her Triple Viking Clan, the run will be a way to make memories while helping others.