

11th Annual FishHawk Ranch Road Race:

A Running Success

by Leda Eaton

On your mark, get set, go...With those words, the 11th annual FishHawk Ranch Road Race was off and running. The race which attracted 750 participants has become a signature event for FishHawk Ranch and Newland Communities. For the past four years, the benefactors of the race have been local Lithia schools; Colleen Bevis Elementary, FishHawk Creek Elementary, Randall Middle School and Newsome High School. Race Directors, Rob King and Steve Dunn, will formally present the money to the schools at a ceremony in March. Stated Dunn, "Last year we gave \$3,000. We hope, after all the money is calculated, we can do the same this year. Over the years, the race has donated more than \$100,000 to charities."

The race, which featured a Fun Run for kids, 5K, and 10K, attracted people from all over the Tampa area who were impressed with how well the race was managed. Dunn said, "This year the race had everything runners want, good timing, perfect weather, food, a well marked course and door prizes. It all came together for this race. It keeps getting better every year."

The combined effort of the FishHawk Ranch HOA staff, Newland Communities staff and the FishHawk Ranch Road Runners, a running club based in FishHawk Ranch, made the race a success. The Newland and HOA staff began preparations months before race day by enlisting business sponsorships of food and prizes. On the day of the race, the HOA and the Road Runners manned stations including registration, water and timing machines, which posted running times using precise dual mat timers. Many Road Runners who weren't volunteering were running the race. Of the 160 members, 49 ran the race and received many top awards. In the 5K, six FishHawk Ranch Road Runners finished in the top ten. In the 10K, four placed in the top ten.

In addition to club participation, many FishHawk Ranch families have created race traditions of their own. John Clarkson and his son Palmer have run together for the past three years as have Leanne Koontz and her son Zachary, eight, who placed third in the 10k race. Some participants take it a step farther, Jane Faulkner of FishHawk Trails has run the race every year since its commencement in 1997.

Trophies, plaques and mugs were handed out to the runners who placed; however, in the end, the real winners were the local schools. Stated Dunn, "Last year many schools used the money to update computers and outdated technology. The ultimate winners of the race are the local area students."

For more information about becoming a sponsor for next year's event, contact Event Coordinator, Erin Olson at eolson@fhrhoa.com or call 685-7880.