

WalkAmerica

Five hundred trek miles for March of Dimes fund-raiser

Fewer people than expected turned out for Sunday's WalkAmerica in Farmington Hills, but that didn't spoil the party for those who came out to the Orchard Ridge campus of Oakland Community College.

March of Dimes spokeswoman Patti Radzik said only about 500 took part at the Farmington Hills site, noting that the "Race for the Cure" on Saturday might have cut into attendance.

The turnout, on a gloriously sunny day, was about half of the projected 1,000 turnout and less than 1998, when 700 participated despite continuous rain and wind.

After completing all or part of the eight-mile trek, walkers enjoyed more than sunshine. There were hot dogs and pop, bagels, music and dancing. Greeting returning youngsters were balloon-holding clowns and even someone wearing a "Teletubbies" costume.

Before the event, Farmington Hills Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi greeted walkers, as did Planet 96.3 radio personalities Vertical and Anne DeLisi.

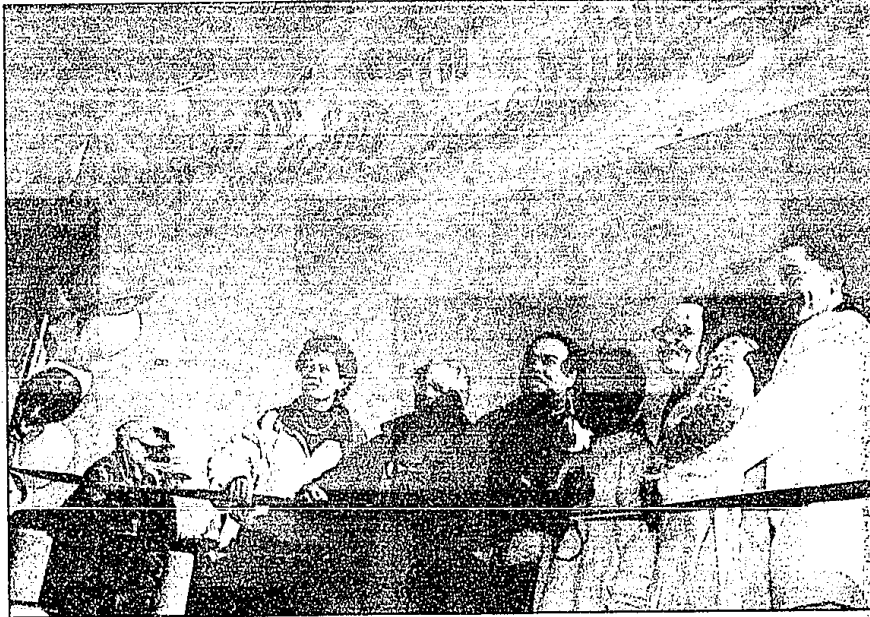
Also taking place were the following: Oakland Community College professor Donald Nichols made some opening remarks; Total Fitness helped folks do calisthenics before hitting the walk trail; the Orchard Lake Middle School Jazz Band performed some numbers.

Before participating with the rest of the "Premie Stars" walk team, Farmington

Observer reporter Tim Smith showed off his now-available book, "Miracle Birth Stories of Very Premature Babies - Little Thumbs Up!" Accompanying Smith was his daughter, Elizabeth, just 1 lb., 14 oz., when born 15 weeks prematurely in November 1994.

Meanwhile, various Farmington-Farmington Hills businesses greeted walkers at each stop along the way, providing various refreshments and encouragement. Shuttle buses were also available to bring back those who couldn't finish.

WalkAmerica is considered the main fund-raiser for the March of Dimes in the fight against infant mortality and birth defects. Several other sites hosted the event in metropolitan Detroit, Saturday and Sunday.



STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LEMMON

Get ready: Walkers get ready to go at Sunday's WalkAmerica for March of Dimes at Oakland Community College, Orchard Ridge campus. About 500 turned out for the annual event that raises money for the March of Dimes.



On their way: Walkers, including adults and kids, make their way on the eight-mile trek during WalkAmerica.

It's out: Farmington Observer reporter Tim Smith poses with his family, Donna, his wife, and Elizabeth, his daughter, in front of a poster announcing the debut of his new book, "Miracle Birth Stories of Very Premature Babies - Little Thumbs Up!" The Smiths participated with the Premie Stars.



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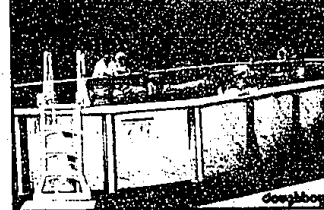
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