

Walkers fight birth defects

By Noreen Flack
special writer

"Smiling faces and aching feet crossed the finish line of a 15-mile walk in the March of Dimes fight against birth defects Sunday at Oakland Community College Orchard Ridge Campus.

The weather made a good day for the 1,100 people who participated in a division of the nationwide WalkAmerica '89 and earned more than \$110,000 in the Oakland County division.

Patti Radzik, March of Dimes Special Events Coordinator for the Southeast Michigan Chapter, said metro Detroit had 11,000 walkers who earned \$1.2 million, which exceeded last year's total of \$875,000.

TEAM WALK, corporations that join as teams representing their companies, substantially contributed to the success of WalkAmerica, Radzik said. Each year the number of pledges increases as teams continue to come back.

One hundred people from IDS Financial Services in Farmington Hills and record-setters in fund raising, showed up for their fourth year.

"The walk ties in real nice with IDS," said Dennis Koczara, IDS division manager. "We help people meet their financial goals. With this, we can help March of Dimes meet its financial goals."

Members of Weight Watchers found the walk tied in to their program also.

"I hope I lose at least one pound from all this," Lillian Zremski of Farmington said at the finish line. "I heard we can lose 100 calories per mile. That would be nice."

"It's a good fund-raiser for the March of Dimes fight against birth defects," Georgia Hammerill of Farmington Hills said. "And it's good exercise at the same time. It's nice to help somebody and do something good for yourself."

OCC WAS the central location from start to finish as walkers hiked up to Farmington Road to Drake Road to 13 Mile and back. Walkers enlisted sponsors who pledged a specific amount of money per kilometer walked.

There was a clear distinction between the "serious walkers" and those out to have fun.

Three young men from Redford, Wallace Boyd, 16, his brother, Norm, 14, and friend, Tom Norgaard, 17, agreed that walking to meet girls made the day much easier.

"What do you think took us so long?" Norm Boyd said.



BRIAN TAVALEAN/staff photographer

Farmington Hills residents John Sule and Bob Richardson, with Farmington Hills Police officer Don Fradette, get the congratulations and

thank you banner in place before the first walkers cross the finish line.

"They were walking too slow," Wallace Boyd said. "We had to stay behind them and that's what took us so much time."

FROM WALKERS, to runners, to people in wheelchairs, everyone wanted to contribute.

Members of the Farmington Amateur Radio Club pitched in with their communication services. Les Hogg, W8HNT, said setting up operators at the check points and providing two vans and one bus to pick up walkers who just could not finish was their way of contributing. They worked with Farmington Hills Police to make sure everything ran smoothly.

Walkers sat on the grass outside an OCC building with shoes and socks off, massaging sore feet. They seemed to agree that the cause was well worth the pain. They also agreed a hot tub was the next event of the day.

One man came through the finish line and asked, "Where's the whirlpool?"

"I feel terrific," said Sandy Boland of Plymouth. "But next time, I'm going to walk five miles a day to get in shape for this."



BRIAN TAVALEAN/staff photographer

Farmington Hills resident Johanna Morrison (at left) stamps Judy Meeta's card at a check point stop.



BRIAN TAVALEAN/staff photographer

A couple of North Farmington High School students leads the pack as it winds around 12 Mile and Farmington Road.

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