

# Bergen Habitat for Humanity hosts third 5K Race to Build

By JOHN BRENNAN  
STAFF WRITER

Habitat for Humanity of Bergen County's 5K run began just two years ago, but already race organizers decided it was time to try a new site to give the event more room to grow.

And after Saturday's event at Overpeck County Park in Teaneck, the move appears to have paid dividends for the organization.

"We had more than 300 people today, which is the most we've ever had," said Habitat Executive Director Jacey Raimondo as she packed up following the run, which began at 9 a.m. "I think the site made a big difference. People love the park, and the weather helped."

The first two Habitat 5K runs were at the reservoir in Harrington Park owned by United Water,

which remains a sponsor of the event.

Temperatures were in the 50s for Saturday's race, and sunshine took the chill out of a windy morning for the runners. A dry course helped as well.

"I ran the event last year at United Water, and it was easier to run here because you didn't have any mud," said Gerald Juan of Teaneck, who was both a participant and a volunteer. See **HABITAT** Page L-6



Runners taking off at Overpeck County Park for Bergen Habitat's 5K Race to Build, which drew more than 300 participants.

MARKO GEORGIEV/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

# Habitat: 5K race held at Overpeck Park

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part and a volunteer helper as part of a dozen members of the Asian Young Life of Bergen County Christian missions organization. "It was nice to have asphalt and grass instead."

Juan said many of his group's members worked with Habitat for Humanity on a recent project, and the race was a way to further strengthen the partnership.

Raimondo said that entrants on Saturday — who paid \$20 to sign up online, or \$25 at the starting line — were a mix of those affiliated with Habitat and those who were not.

"A race like this is an easy way to get people involved, since everybody knows who we are," Raimondo said. "They're willing

to help us out and contribute to the cause, which is affordable housing in New Jersey."

Raimondo added that addressing the extensive damage caused by Superstorm Sandy in 2012 continues to be another key focus for her organization's chapter. So far 44 "critical home repairs" have been performed, most of them in Little Ferry, with 15 more scheduled to be completed by the end of the year.

In the group's 21-year history, homes also have been built or renovated in Teaneck, Hackensack, Englewood, East Rutherford, Waldwick, Garfield and Oradell.

The Vibe Dance Center of Ridgelyfield brought a number of youngsters to Overpeck Park on Saturday to join fitness instructors

at The Gym of Englewood in helping participants warm up before the race. The Vibe dancers later performed dance routines for the crowd.

Juan Mercedes, 22, of Englewood, a frequent 5K participant and winner, led the men's field with a time of 16:09 for the 3.1-mile race. Tara Satrik, a 16-year-old from Demarest, was the fastest female at 20:14. Finishers ranged from 7-year-old Madison Assanah of Teaneck to 80-year-old Bhojraj Thimappa of Hackensack.

Also new to the Habitat event this year was a carnival that took place after the race. Blue Sky Amusements, which donated Saturday's sales to Habitat, is operating the carnival at the park until April 26.



Juan Mercedes, 22, of Englewood was the first male runner crossing the finish line.

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