

Labor Day Road Race marks milestone for some runners

By LIZ FABIAN

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Violet Carden, 89, waves to the adoring crowd as she approaches the finish line of the 5k Labor Day Road Race on Monday. WOODY MARSHALL — wmarshall@macon.com |[Buy Photo](#)

Near the finish at the Labor Day Road Race, cheers are loudest for those moving the slowest.

There was the man who tumbled head first into the pavement just feet away from the end. Volunteers bolstered him on each side as he stepped over the line toward the first aid tent.

The applause near the archway rose again as a runner with a prosthetic running blade hugged another racer just after crossing the line.

“That’s amazing,” one spectator said.

As Violet Carden came around the tree-lined bend entering Central City Park, everyone seemed to know her name.

“Hey, Violet,” they shouted with whoops, hollers and applause as she ran her final sprint, taking time for quick waves along the way.

Even if the people at the curb had not recognized her from decades of races, the crowd saw an 89-year-old worthy of applause.

“I love it,” Carden said between sips of cold water after the race.

“It was a great race,”

Her gait is not as straight as it used to be, but she is determined to keep going.

“I can’t brag of it. I can’t boast of it,” she said. “God gives me the energy.”

Several runners with Run for God traveled from Southside Baptist Church in Warner Robins to join the race.

Jamie Schneller was one of their biggest cheerleaders as they made the final sprint. Schneller delighted in their triumphs and can-do attitudes.

“They started out going, ‘I can’t do that,’ and in 12 weeks they’re running a 5K,” said Schneller, who was proud of her husband and friends completing the race.

“He almost brought me to tears to see this and that they finished,” she said.

One of Tonja Jordan’s supporters had already finished when she returned to put her arm around Jordan as she crossed the line.

“Congratulations, you finished,” the announcer proclaimed as Jordan wiped the sweat from her eyes.

“It was awesome,” Jordan said. “I started a weight-loss journey back in March and I just wanted to give it a try.”

Two weeks ago, the Macon woman began walking the route in addition to doing Zumba fitness routines

“This is just one thing I wanted to challenge myself to do,” said Jordan, who is 43 pounds lighter than she was in spring.

Sandy Tanner, of Milledgeville, completed the 5K, but lingered at the finish line. Craning her neck toward the 10K runners coming in, she watched for her husband.

Twiggs Tanner started 30 minutes after her and about 3 miles up Forsyth Road. He found conditions challenging in the high humidity.

“Hot, very hot,” Twiggs Tanner said as he headed for the cool down after his race.

“I can’t keep up with him,” said Sandy Tanner, who is getting back into running, but found it difficult in the summer.

“It was too hot, for me,” she said. “I’ve got to train in the winter time.”

Liddy Foss, a visually impaired resident of Wesley Glen Ministries, was at the tail end of the 5K pack.

Tethered by a yellow rope to Holly Carter, they crossed together.

“It was great,” said Foss, with a big smile. “I knew when we get close to the finish line, that water came up. It felt great because it was hot out.”

Carter had not intended to race, but volunteered to guide Foss, whom she met just before race time Monday morning.

“We’re in last,” a happy Carter told Foss as they started off near Vineville Baptist Church. They slowly followed the pack that was putting more distance between them as time wore on.

As they neared the park, Foss told Carter, “I just want to cross. I don’t care if we’re last. I just want to cross.”

Foss, 42, who runs track in Special Olympics, enjoys the race.

“I’ve done it before and I love it and I want to do it again,” she said, not even pausing to take a breather.

Carter took a moment to reflect on her small journey that helped Foss go the distance.

“It was really amazing. I loved crossing the finish line, that feeling of accomplishment,” Carter said. “I learned that even when you’re disabled you can do so much. It just made my day to be able to walk with her and talk with her.”

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Read more here: <http://www.macon.com/2014/09/01/3280633/labor-day-road-race-marks-milestone.html#storylink=cpy>