

WHARF TO WHARF

Running Smoothly

Wharf-to-Wharf

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SHMUEL THALER/SENTINEL

Annie Steinhardt and Greg Gibson serenade Wharf to Wharf runners along East Cliff Drive on Sunday.

Annual race goes off without a hitch as thousands descend on county

By CATHY KELLY

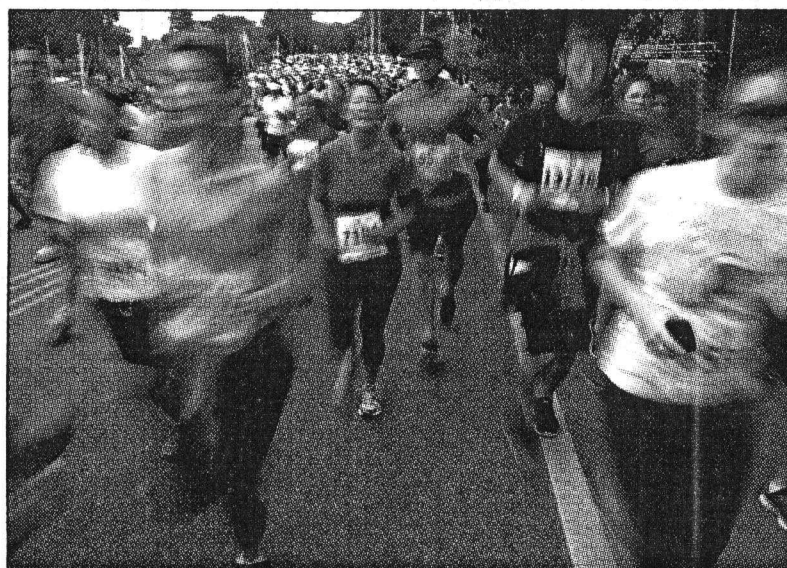
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SANTA CRUZ — The 40th annual Wharf to Wharf ran smoothly Sunday, leading longtime race director Kirby Nicol to declare his last race as director could be the best ever. Nicol is stepping aside after leading the show for more than 20 years.

The popular race drew an estimated 20,000 runners and walkers, plus thousands of cheering spectators lining the six-mile, bay-front course from Santa Cruz

INSIDE

Shadrack Kosgei becomes first three-time Wharf to Wharf winner in race's 40-year history, B8



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SEE RACE ON A2 Runners flow off the Murray Street Bridge in the midst of the race Sunday.

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WHARF TO WHARF SLIDE SHOW

Photos from Sentinel photographer Shmuel Thaler and others

SNAPSHOTS OF THE 2012 WHARF TO WHARF FROM STORIFY

Social media updates and photos from Sentinel staffers and the community.

VIDEO

Video of the finish line, and sights and sounds from the race



SHMUEL THALER/SENTINEL

The energy of the Wharf to Wharf race is reflected in a Pleasure Point window on Sunday morning.



BILL LOVEJOY/SENTINEL

It is close quarters for the thousands of Wharf to Wharf participants on the Murray Street Bridge on Sunday.

RACE

Continued from A1

to Capitola. More than 50 bands and other entertainers serenaded along the way.

"We won't know for sure for a couple of days, but I think it's probably the best race we've ever put on," Nichols said. "We had some very competitive runners and perfect weather and probably the safest race ever. We had one person treated at the hospital and already released, so we're very happy about that."

It was hard to move on Beach Street before the 8:30 a.m. start, with people packed shoulder to shoulder from the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf to the starting line at Cliff Street near the Boardwalk's Coconut Grove.

But it was a happy crowd and an event that had room for everyone — young to old, serious to silly.

And while there were some odd costumes — a panda, a hot dog, a jelly fish — and several expressive T-shirts, most people simply dressed in running gear.

The race was special for an Aptos boy who completed the race for his dad, a veteran who can no longer participate due to injuries suffered in Iraq.

Zane Escoto, 7, has been asking to run the race since his mother told him how she started running in it in 1999, said his mother, Sheree Escoto. She told him that she had never been a runner, but began after her husband encouraged her to give it a try.

"I told him the story and he said, 'I'll take daddy's place so you don't have to run it alone,'" she said. "It was great; he tried really hard and it wasn't easy for him to do the whole thing, but he did. His main goal was to make his daddy proud, and he knew he would be waiting at the finish line."

Nathan Escoto said he couldn't be more proud of his son.

"He's my main man," Escoto said. "It's neat to be able to see my little boy blossoming as an athlete. I gave him an out, but he insisted."

Nathan Escoto didn't want



SHMUEL THALER/SENTINEL

Zane Escoto, 7, of Aptos, who ran the Wharf to Wharf for his father Nathan, an injured combat veteran, heads up East Cliff Drive with his mother Sheree just past the 3-mile mark on Sunday.

to shift the focus from his son, but said only that he was "hurt pretty badly" in Iraq during the Gulf War in 1991. He said he had run the Wharf to Wharf since he was a San Lorenzo Valley High School student and returned from the service to run it again, "come hell or high water."

But he finally stopped in 2006, after doctors' warnings that he shouldn't be running.

"I'm just really proud of my son and my wife," Escoto said. "They are the champions."

He said his son is a "gifted little boy" who excels at school, is on the Jim Booth Swim Team and in Junior Guards. He has a little brother, too, Ian, who is 18 months old.

Sheree Escoto said the boys' dad is not too bad either.

"I would like to say he's doing well," she said. "He's with us, and he's a great father, but it's not without pain and the inability to do the things he loves to do, like run — the things many of us take for granted."

"But he's a trooper, and I guess it's all in how you look at it."

Race organizers said they expect Sunday's event to net \$200,000 to \$300,000 for youth sports and activities in the

county.

High school volunteers lined the route Sunday, rolling up temporary orange fencing afterward.

San Lorenzo Valley High track coach Rob Collins said the school gets \$7,000 per year from the Wharf to Wharf.

"It's a great thing," Collins said. "The county has a very strong cross-country and track program and no school in the county would be where we are without the Wharf to Wharf."

Student Eli Young, 15, of Ben Lomond, said watching the race made him want to run in it.

"It looks pretty fun," he said. "I'd like to do it when I get out of high school and won't have to do this as a fundraiser. That would be good."

The race has been good to 80-year-old Shyrlee Freitas, who was walking it with her daughter, Shelley Yee of Live Oak. It was the 19th race for the duo, and Freitas said her oldest son ran in the first Wharf to Wharf, when he was in high school.

"It's so much fun, we love it," Freitas said. "The music is definitely my favorite part."

Yee said she loved the scenery along the route, but would not get so distracted that they

came in last.

"We're doing a little better," Yee said. "We used to be right in front of the meat wagon. That's what my brother calls it."

Among the horde running the race was Wayne "Big Thunder" Coleman of Pleasanton and Jerry "Fat Jer" Thompson of Milpitas, members of the Fat Boy Running Club who have run the race for more than 20 years.

The two wore fake beards and T-shirts with tuxedos printed on them, going for a ZZ Top "Sharp Dressed Man" look. They said they will join any band along the course that lets them in, and have in the past.

"It's great — all the people lining the streets make this such a fun race," Thompson said.

Nicol, the retiring race director, said he feels lucky to end his stretch on a high note.

"Of course, you like to go out with an outstanding event, and I feel I got lucky with that," he said. "I've been a volunteer since Day One and we have over 2,000 volunteers who make this happen. I'm just happy to be part of it."

Follow Sentinel reporter Cathy Kelly on Twitter @cathykelly9