

# ✓ Wharf race money allotted

Part of \$60,800 in donations go toward track club, asphalt mini-track

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SANTA CRUZ — Organizers of the Wharf To Wharf Race have allocated \$60,800 to Santa Cruz area track and field developments, including the formation of a new county track club and the construction of an asphalt mini-track at New Brighton Middle School.

The donation package is a result of funds raised from the Wharf To Wharf Race, a 6-mile run held annually on the fourth Sunday of July. This year the race sold out its limit of 12,000 runners in advance for the second straight time.

"We felt we have put a lot of money into equipment and facilities over the years," said race official Kirby Nicol. "But in order for track and field to flourish, we need to put more money into programming. So we developed a couple pilot programs."

One is a "county track coach concept," Nicol said, to which the Wharf To Wharf Race has put \$10,000 toward the hiring of local track coach Bill Johnson to develop the Santa Cruz Track Club, centered at Soquel High.

The club has served as an umbrella organization for the Star Track youth club, but under Johnson's direction is expected to expand on youth track and add both masters and elite programs within the club.

"We've gone out and tried to find the ideal person to run the program, who we think is Bill," Nicol said of Johnson, who has been involved in local track and field throughout the 1980s and is currently coaching at Santa Cruz High.

Initially, Johnson's duties mainly

will be to work with youth programs. He will also be asked to organize a track festival next spring, schedule clinics and run all-comers meets, and plan for the addition of a masters program and an elite program in the near future, Nicol said.

"We want the all-comers meets to lead into a county track championship," Nicol said. "We see this all happening over a five-year program."

The other pilot program revolves around a 200-meter asphalt track at the middle school. The community facility is designed to be 13 feet wide, with 30-inch lanes, with painted markings to make it look like a full-size all-weather track.

"It's just the right size for that age group," Nicol said. "It's excellent to teach on, because you don't lose touch with the kids. And it's more than long enough, because mainly at that age you are working with techniques and fundamentals."

There another plus: "It fits on the site," Nicol said.

The Wharf To Wharf directors are working with the City of Capitola to make the track part of a regional park that is to be built adjacent to the school.

The mini-track could be a wave of the future, Nicol said.

"If it works out right, and we are able to do it, we would like to do one a year for next eight or 10 years," he said. "We could have a standardized facility to fit campuses all over the county."

"A track that size is less intimidating to kids," Nicol said. "It gives you a chance to give them an understanding and enthusiasm of the sport."

Other donations include:

- \$14,000 for the six county public high school track and cross country programs; \$3,000 will go directly to cover the fund for equipment commonly used at Soquel High; each school receives \$1,500 (Soquel and Harbor each received \$2,500 because of their participation in race operations).

- \$6,000 to a scholarship fund; money is to be given out annually under program that has yet to be formulated.

- \$5,000 into a fund that eventually will be needed to cover the costs of resurfacing the all-weather surface at the Soquel track.

- \$5,000 to pay the interest on bank loan that was obtained to build the all-weather community track at Soquel High.

- \$1,500 to Soquel Elementary School for an equipment fund and the development of a track program.

- \$1,300 to the Santa Cruz County Special Olympics.

- \$1,000 to the annual International Games, an event for local elementary schools.

"We've been making donations down through the years, but this is the best year we've ever had, financially and every other way," Nicol said.

This is the most the organization has ever donated to the community in one year, because it has more available. And race directors have been meeting since August to decide how to use the money, Nicol said.

"Now we are at a point where we can do more," Nicol said. "We are trying to spend the money in a way that will encourage and promote running and track and field and fitness."