

5K, FUN RUN BENEFIT MONTESSORI SCHOOL

By TOM EVANS
Villager Staff Writer

NORWALK — The first-ever Daffodil Dash 5K and Fun Run to benefit the Town & Country Montessori School in Wilton took off under ideal weather conditions on Sunday morning at Cranbury Park.

With its primary sponsor being Au Pair in America (APIA), it was fitting that the second female to cross the finish line in the inaugural 3.1-mile running race was an au pair.

"Au Pair in America is proud to sponsor The Daffodil Dash," said Loralyn Cropper, an APIA counselor in Weston and Wilton. "This event is a great way for families to spend time together outdoors while supporting the students of Town & Country Montessori. My child goes to Town & Country, and we believe in healthy families doing healthy things for the community."

The money raised from the \$25 pre-registration and \$30 day-of fees went to support programs at the school at 531 Danbury Road in Wilton.

Jana Marketon, an au pair in Weston, was the second woman to finish the Dash. She was continuing a regimen that had her competing in the septathlon in her native Germany.

"I've been here eight months, and I'll probably stay four months more," Marketon said. "Loralyn told us about (this event), and I was really into sports in Germany. I'm grateful they took me into (the AIPA) program. This organization does so many things for us. This weekend offered us the chance to spice the whole thing up a little bit."

Karen Wiffen and Tina Donaher serve as co-directors of Town & Country. Both live in Norwalk.

"This is the kind of event that follows the philosophy of community and school," Donaher said. "It's like a family, and it's great that we can support the community that helps us as we help them. We no longer want to be the best-kept secret in Fairfield County."

Race winner Holland Florian from Southington did not have a direct connection to APIA or Town & Country, but couldn't pass

up the chance to run. Florian is working his way back from injuries this winter that got him cut from his Central Connecticut State University outdoor team.

"I'm always looking for races," Florian said. "I know some people down here, and I decided to come here to run. It was fun. It was a really rocky and wet

► See RUN, Page 7 course, but it was different and crazy. I liked it."

Jen Reese, one of the event organizers, has seen the last of her children begin their education at Town & Country.

"For me, this event is the culmination of my kids going to school there for eight years," Reese said. "This is a great conclusion, and a way to give back to the school that helped my children. All my kids are out of Town & Country, but this is still a great way of getting kids and families outside in a healthy event and activity."

For more information, visit www.aupairinamerica.com, or www.townandcountrymontessori.org.



Photo by Matthew Vinci

AND THEY'RE OFF Adults begin the Daffodil Dash 5K and Fun Run race at Cranbury Park Sunday morning. All proceeds benefit the Town & Country Montessori School in Wilton.