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Franklin

It's a Classic!

Annual Labor Day run in its 30th year of fun, charity

It's a Classic!

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It's a Classic, like a little black dress or "It's A Wonderful Life" at Christmas, but this is one that thousands of people share each Labor Day.

The Franklin Classic is one of the oldest races in Tennessee. Getting passed by the Sonic Coney Dog is almost an accepted part of the Franklin Classic, a race that benefits the Mercy Children's Clinic and takes place every Labor Day in Franklin's Public Square.

The Classic started 29 years ago as the CPS Cancer Run when it was only a 10K. It is now a 10K and 5K Run, along with a 4K Walk and Kid's Kilometer.

Peter Pressman is president of the Nashville Striders, which oversees the race management and takes care of the timing. Pressman has seen what he called "one of the signature running events in Middle Tennessee" transform since he moved to Franklin in 1986. He has run in 18 of the 29 races.

"Over the years, it's evolved to a local Labor Day tradition," said Pressman, who "ran it for 12 years in a row before being on sidelines."

Fans line the street to support those running and it all is set to the live music of the Scat Springs band, Pressman said.

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He enjoys being able to give back to Mercy Children's Clinic and also to the running community. Proceeds from the Classic benefit Mercy Children's Clinic, a non-profit, pediatric healthcare ministry in downtown Franklin. The clinic provides healthcare to children from all socio-economic backgrounds and especially children without health insurance or enrolled in TennCare. Since 1999, more than 8,200 children have called Mercy Children's Clinic their medical home.

"Through events like the Franklin Classic and Habitrot and getting to know local runners has been very positive," Pressman said.

He and his wife, Ruth and two sons, Adam and David, enjoy the "small-town wholesome environment" of Franklin, which permeates the Classic.

He revels in being able to give back to the running community by setting an example to help people as they strive to become runners and provide an "opportunity for support and encouragement."

Pressman would have run every Franklin Classic since 1987, but due to an illness in 1999, he was unable to run that year. In 2004, he had a family wedding to attend, and in 2007, he was out due to an injury, but he still was in attendance to show his support.

In 1999, Pressman suffered from hyperparathyroidism, which is a condition where the blood calcium level skyrockets due to abnormalities in the parathyroid glands.

"I was a stubborn male runner, and I didn't sense the seriousness," Pressman said.

However, after suffering through a six- to eight-month period of increasing pain, discomfort, lethargy and disorientation, Pressman knew he could no longer ignore the symptoms.

"I could sense that something unrelated to training was not right," he said. The illness was causing depletion in the calcium in his bones.

"It was a slow road back," Pressman said. "Running was too much a part of my life to feel that I'd have to give it up."

He was back at the classic the next year in 2000, and he won a third-place trophy in 2002 for his age group, which was 50-plus.

"One of my goals is to keep running," said the 63-year-old. "There are no guarantees."

How much longer will he run the Classic? "That's like asking, 'How much longer do you think you're going to live?'"

"I look forward to many more good times through running," he said.

More on the Classic

This year, many new features and programs have been added to the Classic race. Individuals are able to become a Patron Saint, which means for \$100, an individual or an organization can have a sign to show support along the route of the race.

Cause to Run is the new charity athlete program. The program allows members to be "VIP athletes." There is an initial \$30 fee, and each athlete is encouraged to raise \$300. These individuals will have their own tent, a pre- and post-race snack provided by Smoothie King and exclusive use of City Hall restrooms as opposed to the portable restrooms.

Register online at www.franklinclassic.org. From Aug. 23-Sept. 1, adult registration is to \$30, children's fees to \$25, while the Kids' Kilometer cost

remains the same. On race day, registration starts at 5:45 a.m. with the 5K start at 7 a.m., followed by the 10K start at 7:30 a.m. The awards ceremony is at 9:40 a.m.

On the Franklin Classic Web site, individuals can create their own fundraiser pages.

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