

Owners of Paddy's Pub & O'Hara's Sponsor 9th Annual Road Race

For the past nine years, Paddy's Pub owners Karl and John O'Hara have been waking up at 4 a.m. to make food for the village of West Newton.

Following the annual Paddy's Road Race, which brings in close to 2,000 runners, everyone eats for free.

"We tent off the parking lot across the street and give away food for families," said Karl O'Hara. "My brother and I have a philosophy about giving back to the community. This is our biggest day to give back."

But it goes well beyond filling the bellies of the exhausted racers.

Paddy's Road Race also raises roughly \$30,000 per year from the all-day event, and gives the money to Newton's Special Athletes, a division of Newton's Parks and Recreation.

It is the Newton Special Athletes program's largest fundraiser each year and helps support recreation programs for kids and adults with disabilities.

"It's a good cause. It all starts with that," said O'Hara.

The brothers also own O'Hara's Food and Spirits in Newton Highlands with their father.

Each year they work with Mark Kelly, director of special needs for Newton Parks and Recreation, and a large committee of board members, to put together the event.

The three-mile road race is sponsored by more than 50 businesses and organizations, and is followed by a day filled with Irish Step Dancers, food, family entertainment and music.

The event's head sponsor is Newton's Village Bank.

"It has been a huge West Newton tradition," said Kelly. "The city has always had a very strong therapeutic recreation program for people with special needs—it has always been one of the best programs around—and this race is a major reason why we can fund some of those programs."

Paddy's Road Race is the last run in a series of statewide "Pub-style" races.

This year, breaking from tradition slightly, the event will introduce youth races with the goal of promoting family, fun and fitness. The races will take place on the West Newton Common and all participants will receive a ribbon, said Kelly.

Paddy's originally started more than 25 years ago as The Trubador Trot, but when the O'Haras took over The Trubador, and renamed it Paddy's, they gave birth to the new age running competition.

"We are so grateful to the residents of West Newton, who have let our participants run by their houses once a year for over two decades," said Kelly.

Last year, Kelly said that heavy rains plagued the event, and by the end of the day, snow started to fall from the sky.

But it didn't stop more than 1,000 people from showing up and supporting the cause.

"With last year's downpour of rain and then snow I feel pretty confident, and hope, this year's weather will be better," said Kelly. "I think it shows how much people love the race that so many came out and finished."

Kelly said many of the athletes from the special needs program participate each year.

"It makes it very inclusive, they will be down there and they really look forward to this each year," he said. "It's why we do the race."

By Steve Annear/Staff Writer
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