

5K RACE: A HOT CHILI DAY!

By Joe Kolis

Grace Lutheran Church's 5K race was held on Saturday, March 23rd. As you may recall, they graciously designated the Buffalo Implant Group as the benefactor of a portion of the race proceeds.

It was a brisk, sunny Saturday morning with little to no wind. It was a great day for running in the Buffalo winter. We had received several inches of snow in the days preceding the race and we were concerned that this would impact the number of runners. But, this is Buffalo and 135 ardent runners with their supporters showed up! We were very pleased with the turnout given this was the first time this race has been organized.

B.I.G. was asked to provide volunteers for the race. Grace Lutheran needed people to work registration, traffic duty, water station assignment, raffle ticket sales, etc... B.I.G. stepped up and provided over 20 volunteers. Kathy Maroney, our VP, proved to be an ace raffle ticket salesperson. The Jaskier family kept the runners hydrated at the one-mile mark. Ed Bastian did everything from traffic control to delivering the runner door prizes. (Ed came all the way from Wellsville and we appreciated his help.)

The Kolis extended family and friends did registration, poured refreshments and dished out the chili. Please see the picture of all the B.I.G. dedicated volunteers who had a great time.



Following the race, Pastor Gary Seefeldt awarded the prizes in each age group. He was very appreciative of the volunteers from our group, thanked us and stated that he hoped this was just the beginning of a long relationship between Grace Lutheran and BIG.

Our own Sam Spritzer ran in the race and came in 2nd in his age group with a time of 0:22:02. Congratulations! Sam is a member of the Checkers Running Club and brought several of his friends with him to the race. We appreciate Sam getting the word out to the running clubs in the area.

Pastor Seefeldt asked me to say a few words about the cochlear implant and the effect it has on individual users and their families. I brought Jillian and

Dawn up with me and gave a description of the technology. I described how the cochlear implant has allowed Jillian to orally communicate with her family, friends, classmates...everyone from her bus driver to the clerk at Wegmans.

I concluded by thanking Pastor Seefeldt and Grace Lutheran Church for allowing us to be part of their race and for donating part of the proceeds to us. This donation will help us with our newsletter expenses and with our CART service expense. From the positive feedback we have received about the CART service at our last meeting, we expect to continue to provide this service at our future meetings.

B.I.G. was presented in a very positive light at this event. Our volunteers were anxious to get involved and were very helpful. The cochlear implant users who were present amiably answered many questions the participants asked at the post-race party. I was impressed by how many of the runners came up to us and asked many questions regarding surgery, therapy and many other aspects of the cochlear implant world. Their questions demonstrated their interest in the technology and our verbal interaction with them itself demonstrates how the cochlear has changed our lives.

I feel we truly reached out to the community and highlighted our abilities. Perhaps our message will reach a person or family considering an implant or a user who was not aware of our group or perhaps was reluctant to join us at our meetings. Our group has many outstanding people in it and we showed our willingness to reach out to others who may face the same challenges our members already have. Thanks again to all who participated in this worthwhile event.