Run for the Young hits new highs

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

GREECE — May 8 was a record-setting day at the eighth annual Run for the Young, and that's good news for diocesan youth-ministry programs.

Nearly 500 people took part in the 5-kilometer (3.1 mile) race, by far the event's best total ever. Michael Theisen, race director, added that another 50 took part in the one-mile "fun run," making this year's overall list of entrants more than 100 higher than the previous best.

"We really pushed this in the parishes and schools," said Theisen, the diocesan director of youth ministry.

Theisen estimated that final proceeds will be a record total, nearing $13,000. These monies, raised primarily through entry fees and pledges collected by runners, will enable more youths to attend special diocesan events during the year.

An all-time best was also logged at the finish line, as Jason DeJoy of Henrietta set a record time of 15 minutes, 3 seconds. David McCollam of Macedon was second at 15:05.

Run for the Young attracted males and females of all ages and

Eric Sucar/Catholic Courier

Runners of all ages come out in a pack as they begin the May 8 5K Run for the Young near Greece's St. Lawrence Church.

skill levels — even some in wheelchairs and baby strollers. The Christopher family, parishioners at Greece's Holy Name of Jesus, involved Tina running the 5K course next to her husband, Jason, while he pushed a double stroller containing Jacob, 2 1/2, and Abigail, 11 months. Tina joked that "we're motivation for the other runners," saying their

children's yelling and screaming may have caused entrants to move away from the carriage as quickly as possible. Jacob even got a little exercise in, running the last several feet.

"I win!" Jacob exclaimed a few minutes after the race ended.

The atmosphere remained festive at the post-race awards ceremony in

the St. Lawrence gymnasium. Several runners were called forward to collect medals for placing first in their age divisions, while other folks claimed door prizes. Some entrants may have been smiling simply because they completed the race; such was true for Linda Mehlenbacher, youth minister at Holy Family Catholic Community in Steuben and Livingston counties, who was making her debut Run for the Young.

"I did it! Now I'm hooked," she exclaimed.

Mehlenbacher was among a sizable number of runners who journeyed to Greece from outside Monroe County. A foursome from St. Mary's in Auburn included two men who traded their priestly garb for athletic gear — Father Robert Schrader, pastor, and Father Steve Lape, assisting priest.

Father Lape proudly noted that "I beat the veteran," to which Father Schrader retorted, "Well, I'm 20 years older than him — I'd hope he would!" Both are apparently in pretty good shape: Christine Vivenzio, 17, admitted that she and another St. Mary's youth, 15-year-old Corey Hodge, each finished at least 10 minutes behind their parish priests.