

Cupertino runner goes the extra mile to plan 5k benefiting foster youth

 mercurynews.com/2017/05/17/cupertino-runner-goes-the-extra-mile-to-plan-5k-benefiting-foster-youth/

5/17/2017

Cupertino resident Joy Erf has helped organize the first Flower Run for Kids 5k in Los Altos.
(Photograph by Jacqueline Ramseyer)

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PUBLISHED: May 17, 2017 at 8:30 pm |
UPDATED: May 18, 2017 at 11:44 am

One Cupertino runner is putting in the extra mile for a good cause.

Joy Erf, who has lived in Cupertino for more than 17 years, is helping organize the inaugural 5K Flower Run for Kids on Sunday in Los Altos.

Erf started running in high school and continued in college, but then took a hiatus for years before taking it up again at the recommendation of a friend.

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“It really started about 10 years ago, (when) a friend of mine said, ‘Hey, I’m going to start running again, do you want to start running with me?’ I said, ‘Me? Wow! Okay,’” she said. “It was great. It started purely to get some exercise, get fit and spend some time together. And from there we started giving ourselves challenges and goals.”

She ran her first half marathon in 2008 and her first full marathon in 2010.

“Prior to that, a full marathon was not even on my radar, but a friend of mine had a big milestone birthday coming up and asked if I’d like to celebrate by running a full marathon,” she said. “I agreed to take on the challenge to help celebrate. It was a great experience, and we really felt a sense of accomplishment.”

Other notable runs Erf has done include the Goofy Challenge at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida, where she and her brother ran a half marathon the first day and a full marathon the second day; the Golden Gate Relay; and half marathons all across the state.

Erf placed third in her age category in the Cupertino Big Bunny 5K a few years ago and took first place in her age group at a half marathon in San Leandro last summer.

“Running, to me, is the greatest sport because everybody does it for different reasons, whether it’s personal or



running for others; everybody has their own motivation,” she said. “Running helps me to get exercise and stay fit, feel better mentally and physically, and to de-stress from the day.

It’s also a great way to connect and bond with people. I’ve met a lot of people along the way, and we’ve become really great friends.”

Erf has helped organize community walkathons, the 5K at Montclair Elementary School and the Cupertino Educational Endowment Foundation’s Run for Great Schools 5K.

So when Erf’s volunteer colleague Debbie Crouse approached her about planning a 5K to benefit Child Advocates, Erf was all in.

“We had been working together on events for a few years ... and we talked about using our experience to support causes,” Erf said. “She had the vision to do something for Child Advocates that really could include a wide range of people, raise funds for the cause, build community and bring a greater awareness for Child Advocates and their service to foster children.”

Crouse is on the board of Child Advocates, which “recruits, trains and supports court-appointed special advocates to provide critical emotional support to foster children, ensuring that each child’s needs are met and their voice is heard while they are in the court dependency system,” according to the event page.

“To combine your passion with running for a cause, it brings that much more meaning to the sport,” Erf said. “As runners, we feel empowered to run for a cause. So having an opportunity to put a 5K together for runners to run for Child Advocates, that’s really satisfying to me. There’s proven results that these kids are much better off when they have someone they can turn to and someone to speak up for them. It’s so important.”

The Flower Run begins at 9 a.m. on Main Street in Los Altos. Registration is \$25 and includes a commemorative wristband and raffle ticket.

To register, visit tinyurl.com/flowerrun4kids.