

DELANEY TRIBUTE A WORTHWHILE EVENT

By DON SIKORSKI
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For the husband and wife team of Pete Volkmar and Karen Short, it's a labor of love. The New London couple has been actively involved in the Southeastern Connecticut road racing scene for many years; Volkmar is the co-owner of SNERRO, a timing service that works over 60 events annually, and Short competes in races from 5K to the marathon as part of the Pfizer Racing Team. But it's the Delaney Dash, the annual road race that honors the memory of the late Mohegan Striders team captain Sean Delaney, which consumes the majority of the couple's time. Though both admit some struggles and challenges in putting together such an event, it's both the community service and the honor of "keeping Sean's memory running" that fuels their energies each year.

This year's 7th Annual Delaney Dash will take place on Saturday, May 26th beginning at 9:00am. The 5 Mile Road Race and accompanying 5 kilometer (3.1 mile) fun walk will both start and finish at Old Saybrook Point. Following the race, there will also be a 1/3 Mile Kid's Fun Run. Race proceeds will benefit the Sean Delaney Scholarship Fund, created with the concept of assisting an Old Saybrook senior, competing in cross-country or track, with the opportunity to attend college. To date, \$12,000 in scholarships has been awarded to graduating seniors at Old Saybrook High School. This year, Volkmar and Short plan to award two \$1,000 scholarships on June 7th at the school's Awards Night. The fact that the race can serve as a vehicle to assist with such a worthwhile cause is attributed to Volkmar and Short's efforts and the generosity of the event's sponsors and volunteers.

Sean Delaney was a former teammate of mine and a good friend. Born and raised in Old Saybrook, Sean was recruited by the Mohegan Striders twenty years ago and soon became an integral part of the club's racing team. But what I've always respected most about Sean Delaney was the fact that he was so much more than just another fast runner who won races. Sean was a competitor; personable on the starting line, a monster when the gun went off, and happy to knock down a few cold beers with you when it was all over. Sean became captain of the Mohegan Striders Men's Open Racing Team in 1994, leading his team to a string of consecutive state championships. Although he enjoyed competing, his subsequent struggle with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma made it impossible for him to do so. I recall in admiration Sean telling me of his running ritual almost on a daily basis between bouts of chemotherapy treatments. Sean never made excuses, and he never asked anyone to feel sorry for him. In May 2000, Sean Delaney passed away after a lengthy battle with cancer. He was only 42 years old.

Volkmar and Short hope to attract over 300 runners to this year's event. The first 200 registered runners and walkers (plus the first 50 kids) will get T-shirts. Race awards are always unique at the Delaney Dash. "The race's primary sponsor is The Center for Better Health, a chiropractic and rehabilitative service group for runners located in Old Saybrook. Dr. Kurt Strecker, owner of the business, is also a distance runner. "Dr. Strecker's infectious energy is contagious, and his talented hands have healed many an athlete," says Short. The Mohegan Striders Association has also been consistent sponsors of the race, with many of the club's members either running or volunteering. "We're grateful, when there are a lot of good causes out there, that the club is still sponsoring our race," acknowledged Short. "It's a tribute to Sean's legacy". Other sponsors who have supported the race include Prides Corner Farms, United Abrasives, Fortuna and Cartelli, P.C. Attorneys at Law, Savinelli Well Drilling, Iselin Tree Experts, and CL&P.

Race applications can be found at www.snerro.com and on-line race entry is available via active.com. The race pays for the online fee, another unique feature. The race course is extremely flat and fast and is USATF certified. "The Old Saybrook Police Department has also been a tremendous supporter of the race, always helpful by directing traffic, blocking the intersections, and keeping the runners safe," promote Volkmar and Short. A complimentary race entry and a flowering landscape shrub (courtesy of Prides Corner Farms) will be awarded to anyone donating \$100 or more to Sean's scholarship. Checks for scholarship donation should be payable to the "Old Saybrook Education Foundation" and are tax-deductible. Contact Pete and Karen at (860) 437-7247 or by e-mail at pvolkmar@snet.net for more race information or to volunteer your services in Sean's honor. Despite the stresses and many hours of work that go into coordinating such an event, Volkmar and Short feel that their efforts are worthwhile. "We do this because Sean was our friend, because we want to keep his memory running, and because we, like so many others, miss him."

Don Sikorski writes a twice-monthly running column for the Norwich Bulletin. His "Coach's Corner" column can be accessed at www.moheganstriders.org. He can also be reached by e-mail at kdcsikorski@sbcglobal.net.