

Roxbury Road Race Series Civic Projects

By Scott Benjamin

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The Roxbury Road Race Series provides money annually for projects ranging from grants to area high school cross country and track & field teams to the municipal park improvement fund.

For example, since 1996, the runners in the weekly races have raised more than \$32,000 for the annual T-shirt/grants campaign.

Each year since then, they have purchased T-shirts that feature art work on the front of the shirt and the sponsors on the back.

Since 2000, part of the money has also been used to provide grants to the cross country and track & field programs at the Nonnewaug-Woodbury, Shepaug Valley-Washington, Pomperaug-Southbury, New Milford, Oxford and Brookfield high schools. Those funds have been used to pay for such items as trails, reflective vests, transportation services, track equipment and timing devices.

The series holds championship races each year in May, July and November in which the proceeds are donated to the Roxbury park improvement fund. In most recent years, the combined funding from those three races has been more than \$600.

The runners also have worked with the Roxbury Congregational Church and the Roxbury Recreation Commission each year since 2001 on the Run For A Cure, a Thanksgiving Day race that annually generates more than \$2,000 that is divided between American Cancer Society's Relay For Life and the cancer center at New Milford Hospital.

Starting in 2008, the series began hold a 3.1-mile race each September to benefit autism and juvenile diabetes. The runners also have a race during that month at the Roxbury Land Trust property on River Road to support that organization and raise money in a 2.4-mile run named after former longtime Roxbury runner Ed Sandifer.

Since 2004, the Roxbury Road Race Series has sponsored the Roxbury Marathon and Half-Marathon each autumn. Those races have attracted runners from throughout the United States.

The series started July 2, 1977 at the Booth Free Elementary School under the direction on Dr. William Burley, a Roxbury resident who was then an elementary school principal in New Milford. It was held over eight Saturdays in July and August. It expanded in the mid-1980's to 40 races, which are held from the third week in February to early December.

Most of the races have no entry fee.

Shortly after the series moved to the Everett Hurlburt Community Park Apr. 7, 1990, the runners purchased a sign for the recreation center and then in 2009 paid to trim the weeds around the sign and re-painted it.

The championship races are named after the first three head directors of the series – Dr. Larry Kershner, Bob Lewis and Dr. Burley.