

## Former McKinney student driving force for McKinney race

It's always a pleasure to find someone who selfishly promotes and helps with road races that has proceeds going to good causes, and that's why Emily Willemin wants to introduce Elliot Starcevich.

The former McKinney High School runner began a small 5K with a group of his school buddies, and since that little ballyhooed start, the McKinney Historical Run has grown enough that it has moved downtown for the 2008 5K on Aug. 9.

Willemin, whose running career seemed at end when she sustained a broken sesamoid in her right foot when at Arizona State, has followed Starcevich ever since she discovered his website about the schoolboys getting together for training in the summer.

Willemin said for the first two years, the race was at Towne Lake, which was a two-loop course that was more of a cross country venue than a road race. Willemin, who began serious running again last March and is being coached by Chris Strait, is helping with the race this year. To read more about the evolution of the event, read her report.

By Emily Willemin

I live in McKinney, and a few years ago I was looking for other runners in the area (on the Internet). I ran across a website that was a club of runners, just not ones for me. But I read the site anyway. It was about a group of high school boys getting together over the summer to train.

The kid, Elliot Starcevich, that organized this had waivers, routes, time trials and was even making T-shirts. Then, I read that he wanted to end the summer with a 5K. Well, when I was in high school, I got the girls together all summer to meet me because I was afraid I wouldn't get up to run alone. But the idea resonated with me and the 5K struck me as ambitious and really cool.

I bookmarked the site and kept an eye out. Sure enough, the summer after his senior year, Elliot finally had all of his ducks in a row and was able to have his first 5K race. I was coming off of an injury (tripped over someone's dog running and almost broke my leg). but I was there, hobbling along in the rain. The rain washed off everyone's numbers because Elliot had cardstock for the bibs. He also had put new mulch out for a nature trail portion to help with the mud, and lots of kids were handing out water.

He still managed to get the results right and my time (although slow) matched my watch. He even had a photographer and free pictures posted. On top of the T-shirts and free pictures, he managed to have some money left over to donate to a great cause -- to a kid that had gone to college on a running scholarship and had an accident off-campus, where he lost his leg but didn't have insurance to cover it. Elliot sent the proceeds to his

foundation to help him pay for medical bills and a prosthesis to run with.

The next year (2007), I got my notification that the race entry was online and somehow managed to be the first to enter. A hot and muggy day contributed to a slow time for me, but I still managed to win the race. It was another great day. The number of participants doubled and Elliot had lots of snacks and water out for us. He again donated money to a charity, reserving some to the side to improve the race the next year.

This year, he is donating to Michael Helms, a teacher/coach at McKinney High School. Another part of the proceeds will go toward making the McKinney Historical Run of 2009 a first-class event. Helms is experiencing severe medical complications that have left him unable to work and support his family.

Elliot took me up on my offer to help this year and I am assisting with the course. He has moved the course to downtown McKinney. Streets will be blocked off, cops will be there, the course will be certified and a timing system will be in place. Elliot now attends Stephen F Austin University on a running scholarship. He is one of the most stand-up kids I have ever met. He is always looking for a charity that might normally be overlooked to send proceeds to. He has big dreams for the race. With a kid like this, how can you not want to do everything you can to make him a success, so this is why I felt I had to help.