

# *Race for right reasons*

*(More pictures, story on [Ensuring Christmas 5K](#))*

ARLINGTON -- It wasn't a big race, but the Operation Ensuring Christmas 5K at Ameritrust Stadium in Arlington on Memorial Day was big-hearted. The race raised proceeds for the children of fallen U.S. soldiers to help them in their time of grief.



The OEC web site says Operation Ensuring Christmas provides financial, moral and rehabilitative support to the Children of Fallen American Troops by providing them with Christmas Gift Cards during the holiday and Christmas in July

theme park trips to Orlando, Fla. To read more about this organization, visit [www.operationchristmas.org](http://www.operationchristmas.org).

Whether one agrees with the war in Iraq, many U.S. soldiers are dying there, in Afghanistan and other parts of the world. This race was meant to bring home the message that when reading about the number of soldiers killed, the number represents a person...someone who has died and who's leaving behind family and friends.

Retired Army chaplain Lyle Metzler of Rockwall talked to the runners and walkers before the race to honor the soldiers who have given the ultimate for their country. And he knows personally what it means to lose a friend. His Officer Candidate School roommate Gary Clark was killed in Vietnam in 1967, just days before he was supposed to join his wife in Hawaii for R&R. Lyle spent five intense months with Gary. "I saw him more than my wife during that time," he said.

Lyle and his wife had shared Christmas cards and packages with Gary, who was not yet 21, and his wife. Lyle was not prepared for the phone call near Christmas.

"I was home on leave getting ready to go to Vietnam, and his wife called us (to say that Gary had been killed)." It obviously was a traumatic time as Gary's wife now had to make funeral arrangements over the Christmas holidays rather than celebrate them with Gary.

Lyle, who is a school teacher, says he tells his students of this story and others to emphasize that these are real people being killed.

"It's about people...We're not machines. We're real people," he said. "The stories make remembering them very important. Gary was a real man and was worthy of life. But he gave his so we could be free."

# Operation Ensuring Christmas 5K



Jim Stitt, 15, takes the lead at the start and never looked back at the Operation Ensuring Christmas 5K, May 29, at Ameriques



Winners Jimmy Stitt, 15, and Sharon Urquhart, 47. (Story below)

t Field in Arlington. Stitt, who finished his freshman year at Mansfield Timberview, said he was "out of shape" and more than two minutes off his best time of 17:02 with his 19:04



Second wave of runners chase the leaders.



Near the back at the Operation Ensuring Christmas 5K.



Lovell Bolle, who was among the OEC participants, doesn't let his trophies hide in a case or closet. He oftentimes takes off the top of the trophy and screws in onto the hood of his car. It makes for a nice and unusual hood ornament. He said

## Young and 'old' star (Results)

Jim Stitt, 15, took the lead from the start and the sophomore-to-be easily outdistanced the field to win the Operation Ensuring Christmas 5K at Ameriques Field with a 19:04. Stitt competes in track and cross country in school. But the youngsters had to take a backseat to 47-year-old Sharon Urquhart in the women's division. Sharon won her first overall trophy at a distance that isn't her favorite. "I like longer

most people never comment about the ornament. "It's something only runners would notice," he said.

distances," said the Arlington resident after her 23:07 effort. She began running at age 40 and already has completed 19 marathons. Her most recent was Boston in April when she ran a 3:39 to again qualify for next year. Sharon, a personal trainer, had qualified for this year's Boston with a 3:39 at the Marine Corps Marathon, which she said might be her favorite marathon. Boston was her eighth marathon in seven months, so she has taken some time off to rest. "I haven't run since Boston," she said. Her objective in the OEC was to beat her sons Calvin, 11, and Andy, 15. Calvin, though, proved too tough with a 22:29.