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# Roxbury Road Race Series Civic Projects
**By Scott Benjamin**

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**The Roxbury Road Race Series raises money annually for projects ranging from grants to the area high school cross country and track & field teams to the municipal park improvement fund and Lyme Disease Awareness.**
**For example, since 1996, the runners in the weekly races have raised more than $42,000 for the annual T-shirt/grant campaign. Starting in 1997 it has annually given a plaque to Union Savings Bank for its contribution to that effort. It presented a plaque to Marge De Marrais of Sharon, who occasionally runs in the races, for her contributions to the fund through the years. A year earlier, a plaque was given to David McNamara of Southbury for raising money through a poster that he created on the series.**
**Each year since 1996, the runners have purchased T-shirts that feature art work on the front of the shirt and the sponsors on the back. For the last 20 years, Dave Harvey, a former Bridgewater resident occasionally runs in the races, has designed the primary art work.**
**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, training apparatus, transportation services, track equipment and timing devices. Collectively, the runners have contributed more than $9,500 to those schools. In 2016, Shepaug Valley High School-Washington was awarded $300 to purchase sweatshirts for its girls' cross country team and Nonnewaug High School-Woodbury received $300 toward purchasing a sound system for its outdoor track & field meets.**
**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. Some of the money from the 2012 MidSummer Championship was used to buy road cones for the series.

The runners also have joined forces with the Roxbury Congregational Church and the Roxbury Recreation Commission almost each year since 2001 to sponsor the Run For A Cure, a Thanksgiving Day race that usually generates about $1,500, which is divided between American Cancer Society's Relay For Life and the cancer center at New Milford Hospital. More than $2,500 was generated in the 2013 event. The 2015 race raised more than $1,600 combined for the two organizations and the 2016 run netted $1,294.

Starting in 2008, the series began holding a 3.1-mile race annually to benefit research into autism and juvenile diabetes. They generated $215 from the 2016 event, which was held in August. The runners began holding an annual race in 2009 at the Roxbury Land Trust property on River Road to support that organization. The event netted $260 in 2016. Each September the series raises money from a 2.4-mile staggered-start race named after former longtime Roxbury regular Ed Sandifer. In 2016 that event generated $195.

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 2016 marathon champion traveled from Virginia.

In May 2014 the series co-sponsored a combined 3.7-mile run/1.8-mile walk to promote Lyme Disease Awareness. The initial event raised $380 for treasury of the Class of 2017 at Shepaug Valley High School-Washington as well as additional money for Lyme Disease research. That second annual run in 2015 collected $650 for the two funds. The event was held again in 2016 and is slated for a fourth engagement on May 13, 2017.

Each December since 2011 the runners have suggested that entrants bring an unwrapped toy to the final race of the season and then have contributed those items to needy children during the holiday season through the donation box at the Roxbury Market. More than 25 toys were given in 2016.

In 2015 for the first time, the series collected pre-used clothing, which was donated to the Loaves & Fishes charity in New Milford, which in return provided $60 to the series. A similar event was held in 2016 and another is slated for the 2017 season.

In June 2014, the series contributed $100 to Roxbury's Joey Fund and through the years, the runners have made similar donations to organizations related to

victims of a 2015 house fire in Roxbury, the 9/11 attacks, Hurricane Katrina and the earthquake in Haiti.

The series also held a fund-raiser called Seussical The Musical in March 2016 that collected $250 for the theater production at Shepaug Valley High School.

The runners also combined with the Minor Memorial Library in June 2016 for Exercise Your Mind, a combined run/walk that promoted awareness about the library's summer reading program. The series tentatively plans to hold a fund-raising run in July 2017 to raise money for the library.

The series started on July 2, 1977 at the Booth Free Elementary School under the direction of 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 started to expand in the mid-1980s under head director Larry Kershnar, who also lived in Roxbury. It expanded in the mid-1980's to 40 races, which are held from the third week in February to early December under the direction of head director Bob Lewis.

About 75 percent of the races have no entry fee.

Shortly after the series moved to the Everett Hurlburt Community Park on Apr. 7, 1990, the runners purchased a sign that was posted near the entrance and then in 2009 paid to trim the weeds around the sign and re-painted it.

Two of the championship races are named after the first two head directors of the series – Dr. Burley - the Midsummer - and Dr. Kershnar - the MidSpring.