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Muschiano, DeCastro win Franklin Farm 5K

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Breeze photo by Eric Benevides Two hundred and fifteen runners and walkers answered the starter's horn on Barn D 5K.

Breeze photo by Eric Benevides

CUMBERLAND – She knew that time wasn't on her side, but when Kim Chula-Maguire set the wheels into motion to return the Franklin Farm 5K to the back roads of Cumberland, one of her goals was to surpass the number of runners and walkers that took part in the inaugural race in 2019.

Last Saturday morning, Chula-Maguire, with the help of her 11-month-old running club, the Ravenous Runners, proudly saw 275 people sign up for the race and 215 pin their bibs to their clothing and tour the 3.1 miles.

And several participants from Cumberland and Lincoln were among the field, including the overall winner, Cumberland's Mike Muschiano, whose time of 16:34 was nearly two minutes faster than the runner-up finisher, and the top female finisher, Lincoln's Alicia DeCastro, whose time of 20:26 was also good for 11th place overall.

Speaking of DeCastro, who is the owner of Fundati Coffee in Lincoln, she found out about it through the Ravenous Runners, who train at Lincoln Woods on Saturday mornings and often frequent her shop after their workouts.

“And the only reason I knew about this race was because I go to Fundati and Alicia told me, ‘Hey, there’s a 5K coming up. Why don’t you run it?’” said Muschiano.

A veteran long distance runner who has ran in four of the last six Boston Marathons and will run in the Amica Newport Marathon on Columbus Day weekend, Muschiano seldom runs in races shorter than a 10K, but he couldn’t resist taking a short drive to Franklin Farm for the community event.

“The 5Ks are the most uncomfortable for me,” he said with a laugh. “They’re like a three-mile panic run. But it was fun. (The course) was hilly, but I’m used to it. I train on Mendon Road, Nate Whipple (Highway), and Diamond Hill (Road), so this was second nature to me over here. It’s a beautiful area, and my family lives not too far from here.”

Muschiano, who is a member of the Rhode Runner running club, and his wife, Kristin, welcomed the birth of their son last year, “and we pretty much locked it down for a year,” he admitted. “We were running time trials by ourselves for a while, and we just got back into racing.”

It was awfully tough to tell that Muschiano, who placed third at the Jamestown Half Marathon a weeknd earlier in a time of 1:19.07, was coming off a layoff in last weekend’s race. He broke out to a quick lead and never looked back, as he topped two Cumberland runners, Bryan McNamara, who took second place in 18:26, and Chad Greene of the Wampanoag Road Runners, who finished third in 18:43.

While six of the top eight finishers hailed from Cumberland – Chip Redihan (5th place, 19:11), Chris Bianchi (6th, 19:37), and Ryan Rei (8th, 19:52) also finished the race in under 20 minutes, the top six female finishers were either from Cumberland or Lincoln.

DeCastro, whose running resume includes her time with the La Salle Academy and Elon University running programs, also took the women’s title with ease: Cumberland teenager Mary Daley took second place (and 15th overall) in 21:55, Cumberland’s Samantha Baker was the next finisher (and 21st overall) in 22:56, and Lincoln’s Jennifer Gilson was eight seconds behind Baker in 22nd place.

"This race was great," added DeCastro, who was six days removed from running in the Maine Coast Half Marathon and finishing that race in 1:36:06. "I haven't really run many road races in Rhode Island, so it was so awesome to do this, especially being connected to the Ravenous Runners. I was really proud of them for putting on (the race).

"I had to come run it just for fun," she continued, and added with a laugh. "I haven't been really training, but I think all the time on my feet might have served me well."

While Muschiano and DeCastro were the race's top finishers, the event's winners were the non-profit Northern R.I. Food Pantry and the town's historic Metcalf-Franklin Farm, which received the proceeds.

"It was great to have so many people come out on race day, and thankfully, we had nice weather," noted Chula-Maguire. "I loved the fact that we were able to give prizes to the top runners and there were so many Cumberland residents among those runners. And the money raised for the two Cumberland organizations further bolstered the sense of community and also helped those less fortunate."

Chula-Maguire didn't run in last weekend's event, but she did find herself in a race against time when she stepped up to organize the race on Aug. 1, but thanks to the collective help of her running club and the support of the community, she was able to see the 5K turn into a huge success.

"I knew that organizing a race in less than eight weeks was not an ideal situation," she reported. "We just wanted to get this thing done so we could build on it next year, but my expectations were exceeded by a long shot! As soon as I asked some club members to step up, I knew everything was going to work out. Their responses were positive, robust, and authentic. They took on the roles as if this was their own personal project and followed through with excellence. The race would not have been as successful without them."

Chula-Maguire, who praised Rosemary Gately, who "was with me every step of the way and harnessed a team of volunteers to post physical flyers and social media posts and to collect gifts and food donations for post-race refueling," and her volunteer coordination team of Jennifer Brousseau, Lisa Marceau, and Tristan Roderick, was "just completely overwhelmed by how much the club did," she added. "The Ravenous Runners is a great group of people, and I get emotional when I think about how they pulled together in this endeavor."

Among the age division winners from Cumberland were Brad Heathcote, who won the men's 30-39 title and placed 14th overall in 21:12, and 10-year-old Andrew Van Allen, who took top honors in the boys' 18-under group in 27:28, and also winning their age group were Redihan

(men's 19-29), Bianchi (men's 50-59).

On the women's side, winning their age divisions were Cumberland's Dianne Casillo (ages 50-59, 24:19), Judy Sullivan (60-69, 29:26), and Catherine Savage (70-79, 50:05), and Gilson also took the 40-49 title.