

# RACING THE RAIN

## 500 runners circle Teterboro runway in annual fundraiser

### CHARITY

By **MARINA VILLENEUVE**  
STAFF WRITER

**TETERBORO** – As thunder and jet engines roared around them, hundreds of runners jogged in place inside an aircraft hangar at Teterboro Airport on Saturday morning.

A sudden downpour had delayed the 8:30 a.m. start of the PSE&G Teterboro Airport 5K for 544 runners who had signed up to raise money for local residents in crisis by racing around a runway.

Race Director Cheryl Moses said the event, in its 18th year, has raised more than \$500,000 for the Compassion Fund of Bergen County's **United Way**. "It helps people who fall between the cracks of other service programs," she said.

Each year, the race raises about \$30,000 for the fund, which through its 211 hotline and website helps more than 3,000 people a year pay rent, utilities and other urgent needs.

The weather deterred some who had registered for the morning race, Moses said. But as quickly as the rain came, it left, leaving puddles big enough for children wearing candy-colored sneakers to splash and kick.

The runners – a few soaked, others shedding their shirts – began lining up on the tarmac, and by 8:47 a.m., they were off.

Spectators under umbrellas looked up at the sky every few minutes, straining to differentiate between the sound of jet planes warming up and the roll of thunder.

In just over 15 minutes, the winner, Daniel Njeri, crossed the finish line.

The rain picked up again as Njeri, a Kenyan living in Jersey City, took a cool-down lap. His

friend John Mwaura watched with a smile: "It's not a problem. He likes when it's raining."

The ease of the flat tarmac course drew praise from runners like Derek Lewandowski, 14, of Ridgefield Park and Michelle Kubasek, 17, of Elmwood Park, who said she beat her personal best time.

Near an arch of balloons that marked the start-finish line, long-time friends Julie Lorenzo-Jaqueth of Ogdensburg and Judy Richter of Elmwood Park posed for a picture after the race.

The two met as kindergartners in Jefferson Township. Though both their families ended up moving away, years later they're still close and have started running together.

It was Lorenzo-Jaqueth's first time at the 5K, and she couldn't believe it when a plane took off as she was running.

Usually, flights are suspended the morning of the race – but this year, one runway stayed open. "It was wild," said Lorenzo-Jaqueth.

Underneath a tent with bins of free water bottles stood a group of Union City police officers.

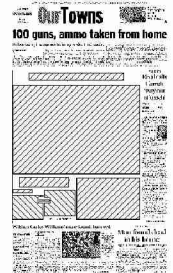
Ivan Palacios, a detective living in Lodi, smiled broadly as he described the run. "It was great. There were no obstacles, no hills or inclines. Just one big turn."

The officers run together every other week, said Detective Arlene Soto of North Arlington. They have done torch runs, the 9-11 Memorial Run and races in the Lincoln Tunnel and had just run another 5K together on

Tuesday.

This race was harder on Anthony Facchini, a lieutenant from Hasbrouck Heights, who shook his head and said: "You should put in there that I'm deathly afraid of thunderstorms, but I was still running."

Email: [villeneuve@northjersey.com](mailto:villeneuve@northjersey.com)





Above, runners making their way around the tarmac in Saturday's 18th annual PSE&G Teterboro Airport 5K.

STAFF PHOTOS BY MARKO GEORGIEV



Winner Daniel Njeri of Jersey City crossing the finish line.