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Hundreds Show Their Colors for Charity at Annual Haley's Run

By Sora O'Doherty



Patriotic red paint was sprayed on the participants of Haley's Run, held July 4. Photo Sora O'Doherty

Clouds of vivid red and blue colors drenched the happy participants of the 12th annual Haley's Fourth of July Color Run for a Reason in Orinda.

In the year that Haley Tom would have graduated from high school, 400 people either volunteered, completed the two-mile walk or ran the five-mile course of the annual run to benefit the Sudden Unexplained Death in Childhood (SUDC) Foundation. Over the past 11 years, the run has raised over \$250,000 for the foundation. The total for this year, which will include the proceeds of the event plus money raised by an online auction, will also be donated to the foundation. Funds are divided between supporting families affected by SUDC and supporting research into the rare and mysterious conditions that resembles sudden infant death syndrome but affects children over the age of 12 months.

Haley Tom, a happy and healthy little girl, died in May 2000 at the age of just 21 months. In the years since, Tom's mother, Suzanne Tom, and her family have hosted the annual Orinda run to help the foundation with its mission, which includes assisting researchers who specialize in stem cell, metabolic disorders, irregular heartbeats and other disorders of the heart or lungs and other, different possible causes of the heartbreaking condition. One leading researcher compiles all the medical information and data to share with people working in the field. More information about the Foundation can be found at www.sudc.org.

The Orinda event has been adopted by the Acalanes Chapter of the National Charity League and mother-daughter teams volunteered to help Tom organize the fun. From stuffing envelopes to staffing the color stations, the girls and their mothers lightened Tom's workload and seemed to be having a blast. The red and blue colors they puffed onto willing runners and walkers were cornstarch based and nontoxic. Tom told the crowd that she had tested them herself and found that the colors completely washed out in the laundry. She grew emotional opening the event speaking about her daughter, and thanking the Acalanes teams for the tremendous help they provided.

Those who opted for the five-mile option enjoyed beautiful views on lands not normally open to the public. East Bay Municipal Water District granted a special permit for the run to cross their land. Runners passed seven gates and two bridges in the course of the beautiful cross-country run, Tom said.

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