

# Cause for celebration

## Whippany Park athletes take active role in impacting lives of special-needs children

By JANE HAVSY  
STAFF WRITER

**WHARTON** — When Dan Keinan came to Celebrate the Children four years ago, he couldn't even stand up straight. But on Wednesday, the 8-year-old from Chester Township jogged proudly around cones, eyes sparkling under the brim of a floppy orange hat. Keinan has dyspraxia, and the walk-a-thon style event helped his muscles and brain connect.

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"This is a place where they respect him," said Zoey Keinan, Dan's mother, as she walked around the flattened-grass course. "He's so cheerful and so loved here. The physical activity is very important. It's helped him make so many other gains."

Each child had his or her performance recorded on a sticker after each lap, usually by a visiting student from Whippany Park High School. Track and field



STAFF PHOTO: BOB KARP

**Whippany Park's Mike Fritz laughs after getting caught by Robbie Cece during a game of duck-duck-goose at Celebrate the Children on Wednesday.**

coach Brad Callahan began bringing students to Celebrate the Children, a school for kids with special needs, three years ago.

Callahan, whose wife

Joelle is a physical therapist at CTC, hoped to expose his student-athletes to different types of children and develop their leadership skills while encouraging them

to help others.

"We all appreciate this so much, being able to impact their lives," Whippany Park senior

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STAFF PHOTO: BOB KARP

**John Richey runs during the walk-a-thon as Whippany Park track and field athletes visited Celebrate the Children on Wednesday.**

## Cause

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Kiera Keller said. "It's a two-way street. They impact our lives too. We make them smile and make their day. Little things are so important to them."

Eugene Miller, a redheaded 17-year-old, told Keller he was excited to participate in track and field like her.

said Miller, who completed 15 laps. "They're fast runners. I don't run. I bowl. It was hard for me."

Keinan received a special award last year for exceeding the number of laps he had predicted he would complete. Nick Furth, a 13-year-old from Mine Hill, did 36 laps, the most of anyone in the morning session. Whippany Park senior Mike Fritz accompanied Furth as he continued to churn out circuits long after ev-

to earn a trophy after tying for the highest number of laps last year.

Fritz, a hurdler and jumper, was one of nine Whippany Park track and field athletes who attended the annual fitness day on Wednesday.

Celebrate the Children has more than 100 students with alternative learning styles on campuses in Wharton and Dover. Even the walkathon was educational, allowing speech, occupational and physical therapists to work with kids "in a less restric-

"The children have an opportunity to carry out their goals with more ease," she said. "You don't impose on them. It just happens."

Added 11-year-old Tyler Johnson of Hackettstown, "Before I started here, I was a reckless mess, about to head to the hospital for rehab. CTC changed my whole life forever."

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