



PAUL DANZER

Community sports

Rodrigues remains inspiration to many

Kalani Rodrigues discovered his passion for running late in life.

He just didn't know that time was short.

As a senior at Heritage High School in 2001, Rodrigues went out for track just to try something different.

Turned out, he was a natural. Though he'd spent much of his youth playing baseball, he was among the fastest sprinters in the region that spring. He continued to run fast for Clark College, earning junior college all-American status as a freshman.

He was on the fast track to success, both as an athlete and as a young man who dreamed of studying fire sciences.

Then the headaches started. And got worse. Soon — much too soon — the dreams of a lifetime were condensed to days.

On Sunday in Vancouver, the impact Rodrigues made on his world will be celebrated for the fifth time since his death from brain cancer at age 21.

"It's the realization of Kalani's vision," said Lori Jimerson, Kalani's mother and the event organizer.

The Kalani Rodrigues Memorial Scholarship 10K Run and 5K Walk will start and end on the Clark College campus. Registration begins at 7 a.m. with the electronic-timed 10K set to start at 8 a.m. and the 5K campus walk at 8:30 a.m.

Money raised will fund academic scholarships for Clark

Danzer:

From Page B1

students in Rodrigues' honor.

The 10-kilometer run, which will wind through downtown Vancouver and the Vancouver Historic Reserve, is a new twist in the event. The idea is to provide those training for the Oct. 4 Portland Marathon an appealing training race.

In the fall of 2003, Rodrigues was diagnosed with a rare inoperable form of brain cancer. He was told it would kill him in six months or less. The location of the tumor was expected to rob him of speech, the ability to write, and other cognitive functions.

Seven months later it appeared he might be winning his battle thanks to a new drug, Temador. At the time, he expressed frustration that his form of cancer wasn't a celebrity cause that some are.

"He told me, 'Mom, is brain cancer such a lost cause that no one gives a care,'" Jimerson said.

Her son suggested staging a fun run as a way to bring awareness and support to brain cancer patients.

It was in that spirit that Jimerson first proposed a run in her son's honor to the Clark College Foundation. If she rounded up enough volunteers, the foundation agreed to go forward with the race.

Then, on what would have been Kalani's 22nd birthday, she received a call from Schering-Plough, the makers of the drug that prolonged his life, pledging \$10,000 to the scholarship fund.

"If you needed a clue from heaven, that was a big one," said Lori, who had written a thank-you letter to the company for

If you go

■ **Event:** K-Rod Run and Walk.

■ **When:** Sunday. The 10-kilometer run starts at 8 a.m., while the 5-kilometer campus walk begins at 8:30 a.m.

■ **Where:** Clark College's Christensen Soccer Field, on the west side of Fort Vancouver Way.

■ **Cost:** \$25.

■ **Registration:** Day-of-race sign up begins at 7 a.m.

■ **Details:** www.clarkcollegefoundation.org/krod

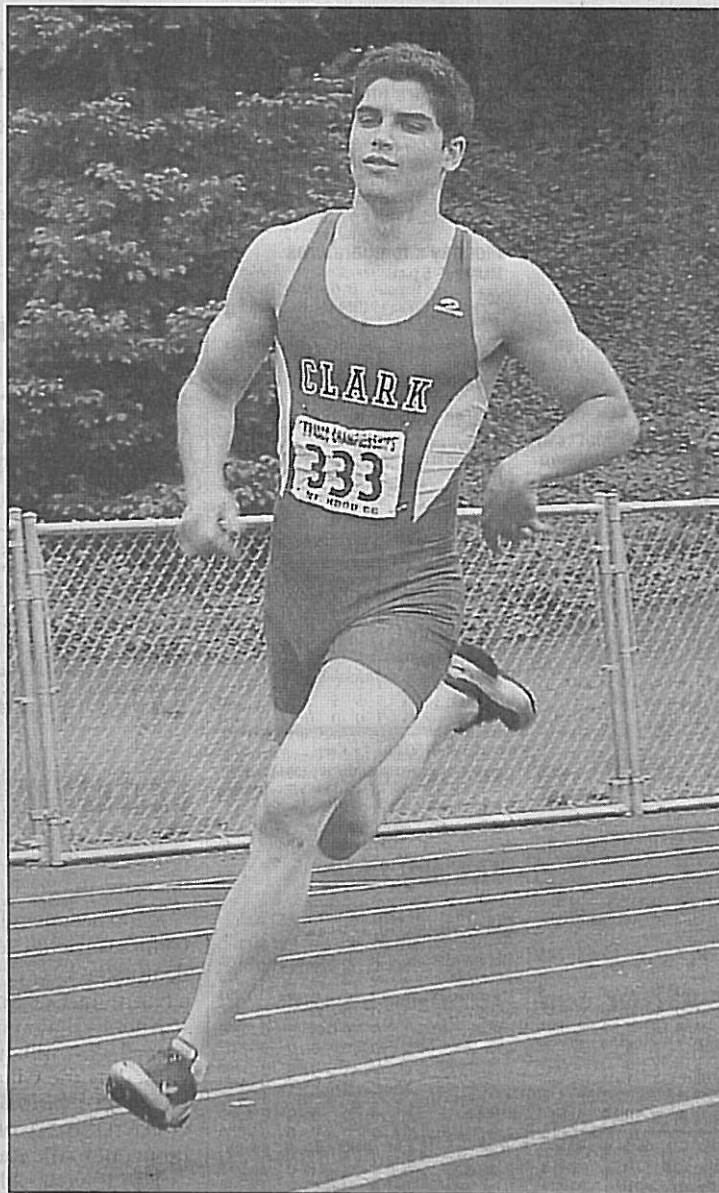
extending Kalani's life.

When an anonymous donor added \$20,000 to the scholarship fund, the event was off and running.

On Monday afternoon, six days before the fifth edition of the K-Rod Run, as the event is affectionately known, Jimerson expressed some apprehension. She is hopeful that adding the 10-K run will bolster participation and buoy the endowed scholarship fund that bear her son's name.

Jimerson and her husband, Kalani's stepfather Skip Jimerson, speak with pride about all the friends their son touched during his too-brief life. Both are Clark College employees who believe that by supporting the dreams of students, the run will make a lasting impact. It brings some awareness to an awful cancer while also helping give students a chance to expand their horizons.

Ultimately, the Jimersons see having an educated society as the best course of treatment in the fight against cancer. Who's to say that the person who discovers an important cancer treatment won't begin their



Columbian file photo

Sunday marks the fifth edition of the K-Rod Run and Walk, a 10-kilometer run and 5K walk fundraiser that honors the life of Kalani Rodrigues, above, who died in 2004 of brain cancer.

college education thanks to a scholarship?

Kalani Rodrigues had to race through life.

On Sunday, the spirit with which he approached his race will be celebrated. And in the process of that event, Kalani Ro-

drigues will continue to enrich other's lives.

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