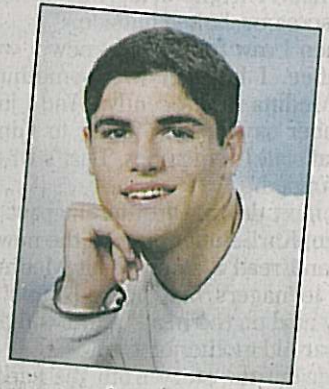


Sprinter's legacy gains momentum



Special to The Columbian
Kalani Rodrigues died of brain cancer at 21.

Running event honoring former Heritage, Clark track star has its best turnout six years after his death

By **DAVE KERN**
Columbian staff writer

Former teammates, friends and coaches braved driving rain Sunday morning to honor Kalani Rodrigues in the sixth run memorializing his life.

And proceeds are benefiting Clark College students today.

"We don't have the best weather but we have the best turnout," said Lori Jimerson, Kalani's mother. Participants numbered 161 people Sunday.

The 21-year-old track star was struck down by brain cancer in 2004.

So far, more than \$64,000 has been raised from the events — the Kalani Rodrigues Memorial Scholarship 10k/5k. Sunday's event is expected to net another \$6,000.

"If Kalani were here today, he would be pretty stunned. He's very humble," Jimerson said.

The race/walk started on the Clark campus near the west tennis courts and ended at the iconic Chime Tower.

Rain was so heavy that a few runners cut armholes in garbage bags for a makeshift running shirt.

"I knew Kalani, he was a buddy of mine," said Jason Leverich, 28, of Vancouver, winner of the 5-kilometer race. "I did track with him here."

Kalani was a sprinter and held records at both Heritage High School and Clark College. His mother said Kalani was being recruited to be a sprinter at the University of Washington.

"We all ran with Kalani," said Mike Khabibulin, 28, of Vancouver, nodding to several friends. "We were all sprinters. So it was a good time to remember Kalani and feel some pain from the 5k, because sprinters don't like to run



ZACHARY KAUFMAN/The Columbian

Runners negotiate rain-slick Columbia Street during Sunday's Kalani Rodrigues Memorial Scholarship run and walk.

Kalani:

From Page A1

distances.”

Brittany Anderson, 27, of Ridgefield said she also ran with Kalani. She said she was at the event “for Kalani and for his family. We were all such a close team, we were like a family.”

Chris McClung, 29, came from Port Angeles to run. He, too, ran at Clark with Kalani. “He was a funny guy,” he said of Kalani. “Good to be around. A hard worker.”

McClung was wearing an Erik Anderson T-shirt from a memorial run for the former Clark College track and cross country coach who died in a February 2009 accident.

Head men’s Clark soccer coach Biniam Afenigus represented college coaches in Sunday’s 10k. Basketball coaches Mike Arnold and Nancy Boone and baseball coach Don Freeman worked as volunteers. Clark instructor Lee Brand also volunteered.

And Clark College President Bob Knight ran the 10k race. He said he’s a regular at the run.

Several Heritage High grads ran and walked at the event, including former Heritage coaches Mike Burdick and Mike Smith. Kalani is in Heritage’s athletic hall of fame.

And Ricky Garcia was proof



ZACHARY KAUFMAN/The Columbian

Despite rain, Sunday’s scholarship event had its best turnout with 161 runners and walkers. Here, runners pass under Interstate 5 on East McLoughlin Boulevard.

that the run is helping young people with their lives.

Garcia, 19, of Clackamas, Ore., said he’s received \$2,600 in scholarships from the endowment. He’s studying engineering at Clark.

“Amazing people,” he said of the Rodrigues/Jimerson family after the 10K race. “They have helped me out with my schooling.” So far, 15 students involved in Clark athletics have been awarded a scholarship.

The Clark College Foundation and the Penguin Athletic Club are the main sponsors of the event.

“This event is in the hearts and minds of Clark College because he is one of ours,” Lisa Gibert of the college’s foundation said of Kalani.

Runners were given synthetic leis after finishing their run or walk.

They were treated to a luau afterwards in Gaiser Hall, along with Hawaiian music and dancing. Jimerson said the Hawaiian community of Clark County always has been supportive.

Participants also were given T-shirts that bear an image of Kalani running and his signature: Kalani Rodrigues #23 K-ROD.

After the event, Jimerson was asked to describe her feelings.

She said her son battled brain cancer. “He wasn’t going to give up.

“Brain cancer defined Kalani’s death,” she said. “His

WHAT IT TAKES:

Wondering what it takes to put on a community run/walk?

Lori Jimerson has become an expert after six years of holding the Kalani Rodrigues Memorial Scholarship event. She generally starts planning for the event seven months early.

There are discussions to have and permits to get.

“This race would not have happened without Nutter Corporation,” she said. The company provided two dozen flaggers who showed up at Clark College at 6 a.m. for the 8 a.m. event.

There were safety and street concerns and plenty of logistics. Two city street workers were at the event, she said.

Jimerson said sponsors were Alpha Graphics; Bamboo Grove Hawaiian Grille; Clark County Amateur Radio Club; Fishhead screen printers; Fit Right Northwest Running and Walking Store; Noho’s Hawaiian Cafe; Tommy’s O’s Pacific Rim Bistro and The Columbian.

Main sponsors were the Clark College Foundation and the Penguin Athletic Club.

There also were about 60 volunteers.

athleticism, education and his fitness defined his life.

“He continues to influence people with this event to go out and be fit.”