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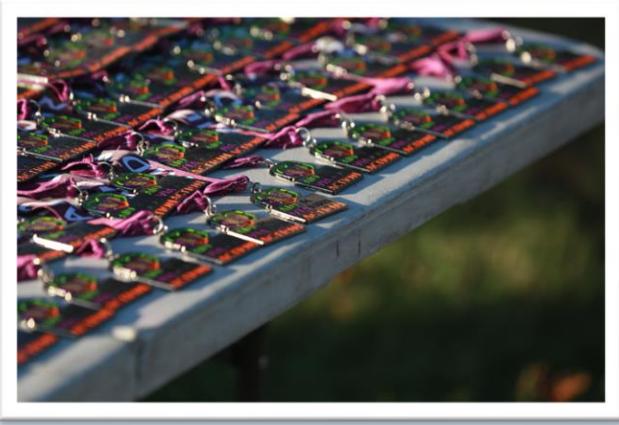
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## Newsletter October 2023

This entire issue of the AVA Newsletter is dedicated to the first Aid Via Action 5K run, which took place September 23, 2023, at Backman Lake Park at 8 am.

The first Aid Via Action 5K run (AVA5K) was an **amazing success!**



I have been volunteering in global health activities since 2012. My original trip was to Honduras with an organization called Health Volunteers Overseas (HVO). Over the years, I became involved with multiple Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), which took me to Belize, Mexico, Haiti, Lebanon, India and, of course, Guatemala. I fell in love with the people in Guatemala and developed tremendous life-long friendships with the surgeons at Hospital Nacional de San Benito (HNSB).



Armed with experience gained from multiple trips and being involved with various organizations, we founded Aid Via Action Inc. on April 1, 2021. We had a widely successful group trip in January of 2023. We have a magnificent group of people and board of

directors that have kept the organization on a wonderful trajectory. However, one of the items that has been very challenging to our organization (and, I am sure, to many other NGOs) is fund raising.

I have met with a few people who are directors of various NGOs and they have given me advice as to how to proceed with activities to generate funds for AVA such that we can further assist HNSB. Of all the many suggestions that I received, organizing a running event was the most appealing to me.

I ran my first marathon in December 2008. Since then, I have completed 7-ultramarathons (50K), 35 full-marathons, 40 half-marathons, and 17 smaller races. Additionally, in 2018 I finished my first Ironman, and have completed 7 half-Ironmans since. I have participated in the Hotter than Hell 100-mile bike ride in Wichita Falls, TX 4 times since 2018. Thus, many people told me that a 5K run was the best way to combine both of my passions: Global Health and Running.

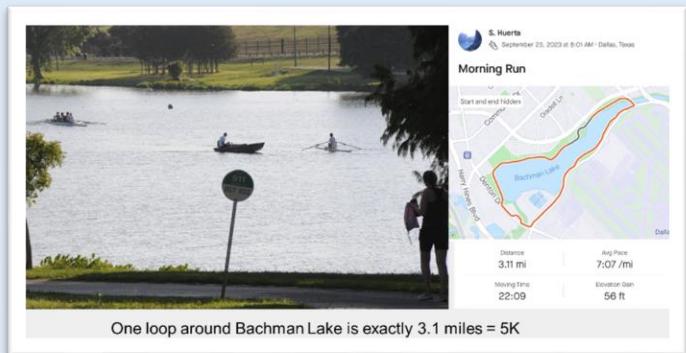
Because of my running background, I thought organizing a 5K race would be as simple as participating in one. I was in for a big surprise!

The first decision to make was the venue for the race. I often run around Bachman Lake Park with Ava. One day, as we were to finish two loops (10K= 6.2 miles), we saw a 5K being organized and I elected to sign up. This, I thought, was a great place for a 5K because one loop around the lake is exactly



3.1 miles (5K) and there are no streets to cross, and it is safe.

I then started investigating how I could be a race director to organize a 5K. I was very naïve to think that I could organize all of this by myself, as I quickly realized all the items that were required from timing the event, to getting city permits, to getting insurance for the runners etc.



I started making several calls and I was fortunate to have called the right person after a few. Olga Cemore is a certified race director who works with Playtri®. After a few minutes of talking to her, it was very clear that I did not know anything about organizing a race and that Olga was the perfect person for this endeavor.

In a couple of days, we signed an agreement for the race with Playtri® and the website was rapidly up

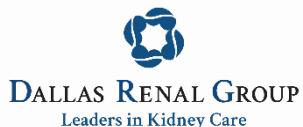
and running for runners to start signing up. I was the second to sign up (Josh Weis, MD was the first). My entire board of directors also signed up for the race within a few days. I was also naïve to think that I had to pay the fee to Playtri® and I could sit back and wait for race day. I was in for a big surprise! I had to get a park permit, find someone to make finisher and award medals, work on getting race T-shirts, find volunteers, recruit an announcer, get porta-potties for race day, etc.



Olga Cemore, certified race director

Further, all these items cost a considerable amount of money. Olga told me that with race sign ups I would be lucky if I could break even. I **panicked!** I called everyone I knew. I rapidly found that I did not have many friends, but the ones I had did sign up. This included international friends from Japan (Etsuro Umemoto), Brazil (Luiz Rocha, MD), Mexico (Christian Huchim, MD), and Guatemala (Anny Ochoa, MD and Cesar Ortiz, MD). I had friends and relatives sign up for the virtual options from California, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania. My board of directors was magnificent getting people to sign up for the race.

Olga also mentioned that most of the money to be raised would be from donations and sponsors. The friends that I had were not only good at signing up but also donating money. I then got online and started sending letters to obtain



sponsorships from multiple sites that I thought would be interested like REI®, Luke's Loker®, Cliff®, LA Fitness®, Run On®, the Dallas Running Club, and multiple other sites like that. I must have sent 50 letters requesting support. I received ZERO responses from this strategy.

It was through my friends that I also started getting sponsorships, the first of which was The Dallas Renal Group. With this positive response, I next approached my realtor and good friend Uzziel Valdiviezo with Fife & Associates LLC. Just like he has been working on getting properties for me, he was



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incredibly helpful becoming the major official sponsor for the race.

Another major sponsor that was magnificent, making this event an extremely wonderful success was our own board member and friend Secherre Michaelis, CRNA who was exceedingly active recruiting runners and other sponsors. It was, thus, a lot of friends and the magnificent assistance of my board of directors that allowed this to be a success.

I was next faced with the need to find someone to make the medals and the T-shirts for the race. Olga helped me with a few recommendations for this and I corresponded with someone for the medals who was extremely quick to respond to my inquiries and even though, it was an expensive proposal, because we were getting closer to race day, I elected to go with him.

The story with the T-shirts was a different story. I had multiple

options, but had my good friend Larry Walter help me with this. Larry Walter has a company in Newport Beach who designs clothing for his amazing hobby and passion for sailing. I never doubted that Larry would perform an outstanding job for me, and he did. The race T-

shirts were amazing.

Getting portapotties, an announcer and volunteers for race day had to be done on a last-minute basis, but Olga helped me with the former and a few medical students

helped me with the latter. Miranda and Tanya are



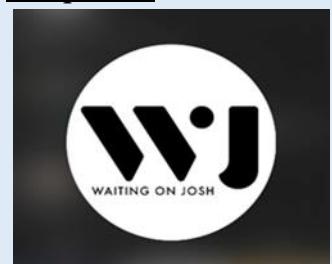
two medical students that were in Guatemala earlier this year at HNSB performing research activities and they agreed to help at a very last minute with packet pick up the day of the race. They were excellent.



Miranda Flores and Tanya Reyna, Medical Students who have been to HNSB

## RACE DAY

Race day was nothing but **perfect!** We had a band from a group of nurses at the VA and Parkland that I kept hearing that they were very good. They were not good, they were exceptional. Carlos and Winston kindly agreed to do this for me for free. The name of the band (do not ask me why) is waiting on Josh. It added a very nice touch to our activity that



day. They also had a recording for the National Anthem that was played just before the race.

Secherre had also organized a massage person for all that needed one before or after the race. Brooke Neff of Camp Gladiator provided an incredible warm-up. Derek Neff provided more provisions for the runners post-race.

After the National Anthem, a nice warm-up, and the band playing the

Rocky I soundtrack, we were ready for a nice start. It was hotter than expected but since everything else was so perfect, I did not mind these additional degrees of heat. I was very familiar with the lake, and I think that the excitement of the whole race made me start way too fast, but I still had energy to say "hi" to Secherre's husband (Bret) and daughter

(Sophie) who were giving water by the water station close to the mile 2 marker.

Crossing the finish line was also wonderful. There were volunteers passing out

the medals. There was plenty of water provided by Uzziel and Secherre's friends. Water and Gatorade were also accompanied by some bananas and oranges. The band was playing, and everyone seemed to be having a good time. It was nice to see all our sponsors at the end of the race congratulating the runners for a good day of exercise. I am not a massage person, but it was good to see a few people getting a good massage after a mildly hot 5K. At around 8:30 am most of the runners had completed



Brooke Neff, a Camp Gladiator Coach



the race and the award ceremony started promptly at 9:00 am. Several runners received a well-deserved award after the race.



Just like the entire race, everyone mentioned that the award ceremony was very well organized.

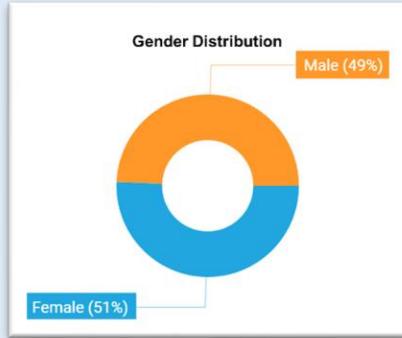
## The Numbers

By race day, we had 222 registrants. Of all

AGE GROUP	COUNT	PERCENTAGE
Under 18	21	9.46%
Ages (18 - 29)	32	14.41%
Ages (30 - 39)	59	26.58%
Ages (40 - 49)	58	26.13%
Ages (50 - 64)	33	14.86%
Over 65	19	8.56%
<b>Total</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>100%</b>

registrants, 122 showed up to the race to run or walk the 5K. We have 36 virtual sign ups. The age range was 6 to 84 years old, with and almost 50/50 distribution between men and women.

One of the major promises that I have always made to all the donors who have been extremely generous to our cause is to be entirely transparent



about how much money we get and where the money goes. Thus, I have no hesitation in telling everyone how much this cost and how much we generated from the event.

## DONATIONS TO RACE WEBSITE



I also want to let all the donors know that this is the first race, and we learned a great deal from it. The next time around, we will be able to generate more funds that can directly go to helping the people of Guatemala. In the tables that follow there are the costs and the funds generated from the event.

## DONATIONS DIRECTLY TO THE AVA WEBSITE

	25	1	\$25.00
	50	5	\$250.00
	75	1	\$75.00
	100	3	\$300.00
	250	1	\$250.00
	300	1	\$300.00
	350	1	\$350.00
	3000	1	\$3,000.00
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$4,550.00</b>

None of the funds generated from donations were used to pay for the cost of various items for the event. The **donations** received from donors will be used directly to **help the people in Guatemala** during our next trip in November.

We had 48 people who in addition to the registration fee donated to AVA anywhere between \$8.88 to \$500.00. Additionally, 12 people donated directly to the AVA website because of learning about the race. We had four official sponsors.

Expenses		INCOME FROM ALL SOURCES	
PlayTRI Organizer	\$3,878.54	Income from Participants	\$9,399.00
Park Free Permit	\$825.00	Donations on RACE Website	\$3,163.88
T-Shirts	\$3,266.47	DONATIONS FROM AVA	\$1,250.00
Medals	\$1,524.60	SPONSORS	\$3,000.00
Porta-Potties	\$228.11	TOTAL	\$16,812.88
Volunteers	\$650.00	<b>NET INCOME FROM EVENT = \$6,440.16</b>	
Total	\$10,372.72		

There are several items that we can undertake next year to minimize the cost of the race and become more profitable for our short mission trips to Guatemala. We can minimize the cost of the medals and T-shirts as well as money paid to volunteers and the announcer. That will give us a better opportunity to deliver more help to all the patients in Guatemala who do not have any resources to pay for medical care.



VA North Texas Health Care System Group

I am forever grateful to all the donors and runners who came together to make this 5K and amazing success. I would need to write many newsletters to find sufficient space to thank all the people who helped me along the way. However, I am extremely grateful to my entire board of directors who were very active in various aspects of the race. I am especially grateful to Secherre Michaelis, CRNA who had a great deal of creativity to bring tons of activities to the race. She also had her husband and

daughter come and volunteer for the event. I am also extremely grateful to Uzziel Valdiviezo who was one of the major sponsors of the race. Members from the VA North Texas Health Care System operating room (nurses, CRNAs, anesthesiologists) had an incredible presence at the race, and I am grateful to all of them.

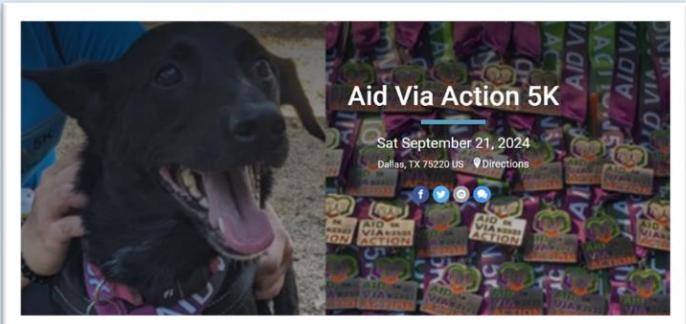


VA North Texas Health Care System Group and Sophie

It is wonderful to see that when we all come together with a good mission in life, great things can be accomplished. Of note, the day for the 5K race for 2024 has already been released and the website is up and running for early registrants. A link to the registration can be found at our AVA website:

[www.aidviaaction.org](http://www.aidviaaction.org)

Go to AVA Events and scroll down to the race 5K September 21, 2024. You can also click on the link on the picture below. I hope to see you all there.



<https://runsignup.com/Race/TX/Dallas/AidviaAction5K>

It is important to note that no one for the trips that we make to Guatemala receives funds from AVA to travel. Each participant pays for travel, hotel, and meals on their own. The only money that is used from AVA is and will be for supplies needed for the



hospital for the cases and some of the supplies that we buy from the US to the operating room such as gloves, gowns, shoe covers, and masks. This is consistent with the mission of AVA, which states that 100% of the money received from our generous donors ends up directly helping the people of Guatemala. The AVA5k was a tremendous success for everyone.

THANK YOU ALL!

S. Huerta

Sergio Huerta, M.D., F.A.C.S., HEC-C  
Aid Via Action Inc.  
President & CEO

**Big thanks to our donors for the race!**



David Wang, Aida Meza-Gallegos, Ephraim Ubina, Mildred Mendoza, Shaalan Beg, Irwin Brown, Sung-hee Choi, Richard Cunningham, Ann Mottershaw, Matthew Schwerin, Carol Kashefi, Hannah Armstrong, Kathryn Nelson, Hector Latorre, Jose Vargas Alvarado, Carla Scott, Betty Richardson Justice, Byoung Lee, Nguyen Tran, Sonya Reddy, Sundeep Jujala, Renee Smalls, Dennerd Ovando Jr, Joy Chen, Victor Victorov, Robert Hettler, Michael Makhinson, Ricardo Farias, Senthil Sambandam, Wes Keith, Cristian Huchim, Elaine Briggs, Rahul Banerjee, Phillip Chavez, Thai Pham, David Truong, Bryan Romito, Cesar Ortiz, Jared McAllister, Edie Brucker, Leticia Khosama, Michael Hu, Roger Bedimo, Katherine Weber, Jenny Li, Savannah Brock, Joshua Weis, Irma Quinto, Joanna McCarthy, Richard Cunningham, Kay Sy, Julie Davidson, Martin Malone, Raquel Ramirez, Lee Brock, Michael Becerra, Linda M Pitts, George Kartsotis, Madison Argo.