

Iron Girl race event in Tempe will be family affair

Relatives young and old run together for different reasons

The Iron Girl Tempe 10-mile and 5K event always attracts a unique group of females.

This year is no different. The races, which are scheduled for Sunday (10-mile starts at 8 a.m., 5K at 8:20 a.m.) at Tempe Town Lake, are expected to draw nearly 2,000 participants of all fitness levels ranging in ages from 7 to 78.



Alice Scannell

Two competitors, one of the youngest and one of the oldest, are both from Tempe.

Alice Scannell, 71, will be running along with eight family members: three daughters, one daughter-in-law and four granddaughters (ages 9-15).



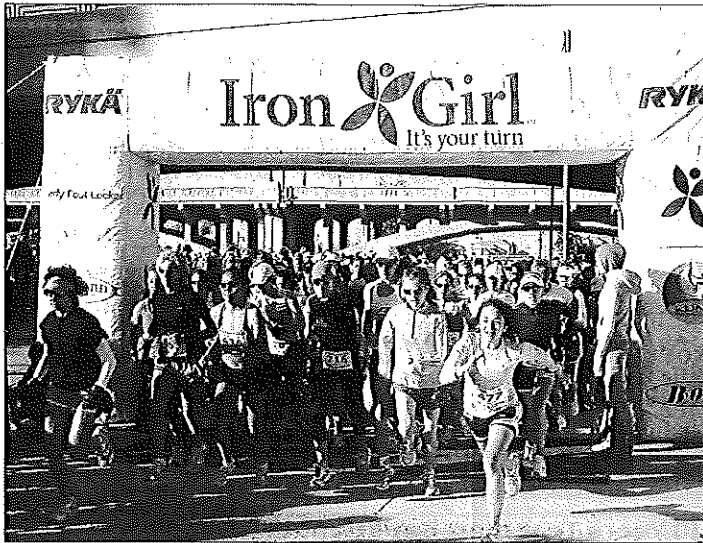
Sydney Washington

Eight-year-old Sydney Washington has a special running buddy for her race, her mother Heidi, who was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in September 2001.

Scannell described her interest in the sport as not only a health thing but also a social event for the family. Son Michael Scannell — who was a cross country runner at Arizona State, won the inaugural Phoenix Marathon and is a top masters runner — "kind of got the whole family into it."

"My daughters (Mary Scannell and Karen Mitchell) have run races all over the country."

"I have been running since 2000," she explained. "It



FAST START: Runners and walkers make a clean break at the start of the 2006 Iron Girl race at Tempe Town Lake.

seemed to be the thing at the time. I also wanted to drop a pound or two and ward off any senior health problems.

"Now even if I skip a day or two, I really feel guilty. It (running) gets a hold of you, just gets in your blood."

Scannell, who is from Wisconsin but moved to Tempe in 1964, walks/runs "one or two" miles every day in and around Tempe or at South Mountain.

However, she only races once or twice a year. "I'm no speed demon," she admitted.

Other family members who are participating in Sunday's events are daughter-in-law Janet Scannell and her daughter Eryn, who are coming in from Michigan; Mitchell (who along with sister Mary has participated in five P.F. Chang's Rock 'n' Roll Marathons or 1/2

Marathons) and her daughter Catherine, who are flying in from Washington state; daughter Cathie LaBarbera and her daughters Jaclyn and Kristyn, who will make the trip from Chandler; and Mary, who lives in Tempe.

"Everyone is doing the 5K on Sunday," said Mary. "I don't think we are going to try and run together. We'll just all do our own thing and meet up afterward."

For Heidi Washington, a chance to run with her daughter Sydney was unthinkable six years ago — when she topped the scales at 260 pounds.

"I had two daughters under the age of 1 in September 2001 and another one due in two months when I was diagnosed with MS," Heidi said. "This was something that you never dreamed would happen

to you. I went into shock, was depressed and eventually became bedridden."

Washington was having complications from her medication due to her ethnicity — medicines which work for white women do not have the same effect on African-American women.

So one day she decided to stop taking the medication. She also began lifting weights to build her upper body strength (since doctors had told her she would be in a wheelchair within three years) and walking/running while she still could.

"I lost 140 pounds, got down to as low as 125," Washington said. "I'm healthier than ever before, my energy level is through the roof, my mental health has improved — I'm beating this disease."

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"Sydney asked me three weeks ago to be her running buddy and although I haven't been training to run a 5K, I'm doing it for her."

HEIDI WASHINGTON
TEMPE WOMAN WHO SUFFERS FROM MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS BUT WILL BE RUNNING THE IRON GIRL 5K SUNDAY WITH HER 8-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER

weeks ago to be her running buddy and although I haven't been training to run a 5K, I'm doing it for her."

Sydney is a member of Girls on the Run, one of the after-school programs offered to third- through fifth-graders at Tempe Rover Elementary.

Girls on the Run is a non-profit prevention program that encourages preteen girls to develop self-respect and healthy lifestyles through running. The curriculum addresses physical, emotional, mental, social and spiritual well-being.

"They meet two days a week and talk life skills for the first 30 minutes, then they break into their running groups," Heidi said.

So Sunday, instead of being in service at New Song Bible Ministries in Tempe where her husband Gerald is pastor, Heidi will be running with Sydney.

"Gerald, Madison and Bailey (Heidi's other daughters) will be cheering from the sidelines," Heidi said.

"The members from the church will also be there at the race cheering her on as well as my parents who are coming all the way from Detroit just for the race. We are planning a special church service immediately following the race," she said.

Between the family members the Scannells will have in tow and the Washingtons' root-

ing section, I suspect that will be enough people to line the Mill Avenue segment on both sides of the street!

THE PACK IS BACK

The Chandler Packers Jr. Midget team was invited by American Youth Football as a wild-card team to compete at the national championships next week in Orlando, Fla. Some teams decline to attend the national tournament for various reasons, so wild-card bids are issued in order to fill the bracket.

"Yeah, we, the Packers, have to be the luckiest team alive," said Lisa Grayer, wife of Chandler Youth Football president Dee Grayer. "We are excited that we have yet another opportunity to go to Florida."

The Jr. Pee Wee Rattlers were also offered a bid, but declined based on availability of players.

The Packers (9-2), who are ages 11-13, will join fellow Chandler representatives the Red Raiders and the Blitz at the tournament, where they all will try to win three games for a national title.

"It's not the road they planned to take, but they ended up where they wanted to be," Dee Grayer said.

In last week's column detailing the success of the Raiders and the Blitz, one young man's name was left off the roster. Eleven-year-old Cody Cardenas, a first-year player for the Blitz, will also be making the trip to Orlando.

It's not too late to help the teams with expenses for their trip to Orlando. An account has been set up at Wells Fargo Bank — No. 1404927350 — and donations are being accepted.

Know someone who deserves mention in East Valley Victories? E-mail or call Billye Jill Paulson at bpaulson@evtrib.com or (480) 898-6862.

MARATHON GIRLS:

Mary Scannell, Karen Mitchell (Alice Scannell's daughters) and Kristyn LaBarbera (Alice's granddaughter) show off their hardware after the 2007 P.F. Chang's Rock 'n' Roll



RUNNING WITH THE TURKEY:

From left, Alice Scannell, grandchildren Robert, Jaclyn and Kristyn and daughter Cathie LaBarbera had a plan to keep the