

## 10K race helps raise money for Stevens Creek Trail

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MOUNTAIN VIEW -- The air around Microsoft's Silicon Valley campus in Mountain View on Sunday was thick with the smell of freshly brewed coffee, poofs of doughnut sugar-dust, and plenty of dopamine, as 1,000 runners, walkers and stroller-bound toddlers took to the nearby Stevens Creek Trail with a vengeance.

The heaving, sweating masses had turned out for the Trailblazer Race, a Microsoft-sponsored, volunteer-supported 10K and 5K run/walk that raises money to improve and expand one of the Bay Area's most beloved running paths.

"People really believe in this trail," said Microsoft's volunteer coordinator Dan Costello as runners of every shape, size and age stumbled across the finish line behind him. He said many valley employees who commute by bike or on foot along the Stevens Creek pathway "have a deep appreciation for the trail, especially in times of high fuel costs and environmental concerns."

The asphalt-paved trail was created by the city in 1991 and now runs five miles through Mountain View, with another one-mile stretch completed in nearby Cupertino. While not a long trail, its devotees say the path following Stevens Creek is one of the area's best-developed as well as a crucial link to the Bay Trail, a work-in-progress that now encircles much of San Francisco Bay.

Aaron Grossman, executive director of the volunteer group Friends of Stevens Creek Trail, said the annual fundraiser has helped the group improve the trail -- doing things like restoring native plant life -- while also lobby for an expansion to twice its current size.

"We are approaching 50 percent of the length we envision, but it's been the relatively easy 50 percent," said Grossman, adding that weaving new sections around private land requires a lot of political heavy lifting, including endless governmental hearings. "We hope one day to have the trail extend from the bay to the mountains."

Last year, the race took in \$30,000 from participant fees. This year, said Grossman, the event drew more than 1,000 people for the first time, "so I'd expect we'll raise somewhere between \$35,000 and \$40,000."

Helping to raise that money Sunday were Microsoft software engineer Steve Chin, his wife Kamal and their 2-year-old son Alex. The trio had just completed the race -- Alex in stroller. His dad said the trail looked just as impressive this weekend as it does every time he jogs along its wildlife-infused ecosystem.

"It's really beautiful out there," said Chin. "You get that nice bay breeze and you're away from all the buildings so you feel like you're in another world."

Asked if he had seen any of the trail's bountiful avian community, son Alex said no, "the birds were all sleeping."

But, he quickly added, "I saw flies."

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