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Newsletter September 2024

This issue of the AVA Newsletter is dedicated to the second Aid Via Action 5K run (AVA 5K), which took place September 21, 2024, at Bachman Lake in Dallas, Texas. Following a successful inaugural [AVA 5K](#) in 2023, it set a high bar. But I am pleased to announce that this 2nd Annual AVA 5K was even better. Read the following note to be part of this amazing story.



First, a few announcements:

1. Keisha Hill has taken a position within AVA as our director of development.
2. Secherre Michaelis, CRNA has agreed to be our director of operations.
3. On September 20, 2024, the Board of Directors of AVA unanimously approved the application of Dr. Eric Johnson to become a member of our Board of Directors.

We believe that all these new changes will make AVA much stronger.

Our AVA 5K had a few changes this year. First, the medals were handmade by Guatemalan artist who hand-drafted each finisher



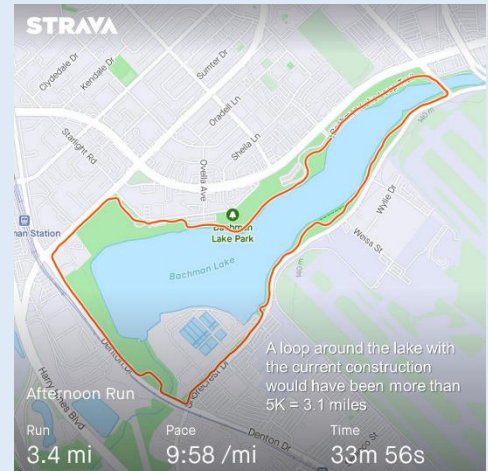
medal provided to all finishers. Based on our experience from last year, We had 300 medals made and brought them in my suitcase after the last AVA SMT in Guatemala this past June.

As I started seeing the numbers, I was nervous that 300 were too many. For this reason, when it came to selecting the number of t-shirts, we only had 250 made. Surprisingly, the number of medals was just right, and the number of t-shirts was a little too few.



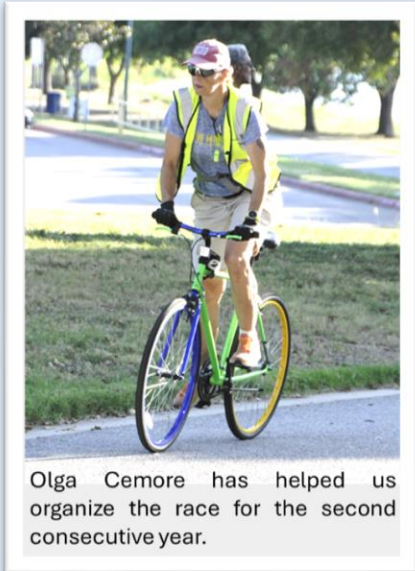
The second major change that was concerning for me was that the Bachman Lake had been undergoing construction since early in the year. When I signed up the contract with the park, we expected that construction was going to be done by the time of the race. A couple of weeks before the race, I went for a run around the lake with our dog Ava, and Ava and I decided that construction will not be completed by race day.

With all the construction being done, it was still possible to complete a full loop around the lake with several detours. The detours were cumbersome and challenging to follow, and a loop around the lake would be over 5K (3.4 miles).



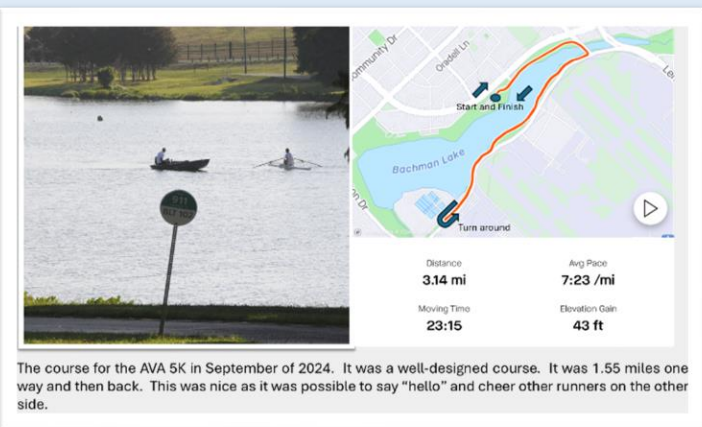
The options were to have a different start and finish points. This would make people walk to the park house a few yards and the start times would be the same for all runners. These issues combined with the cumbersome detours were not good options.

We were lucky to have Olga Cemore with Playtri as the as a certified race director. After a few emails,



she told me that the best strategy was to have the same start and finish line and go out 1.55 miles and then come back. This would allow all runners to run on the better area of the lake and have all start times based on chip time.

While I was initially uncertain as to how this would play out. It tuned out to be a very nice course. It was good to see a number or runners after I was done with half of the loop who were all cheering with a great deal of enthusiasm.

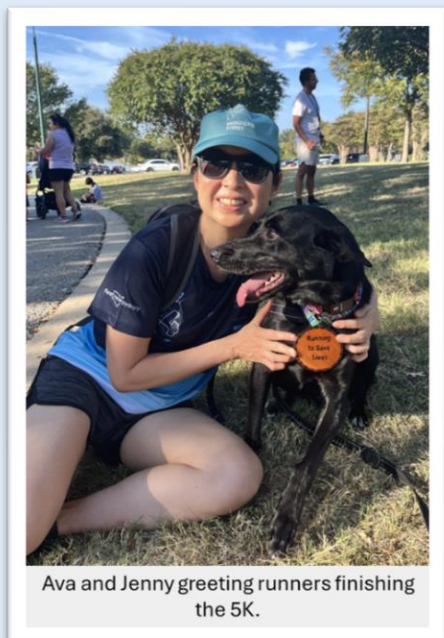


An interesting challenge that we faced this year was that the gate at the park to allow people to get to the parking lot and to have access to the park house was

supposed to be unlocked the night before, and it was not.

Jenny and I had just got back from Sydney, Australia the Monday prior to the AVA 5K. After completing the Sydney Marathon, I officially became a member of the Seven Continents Club. Australia was the last continent. Another newsletter will tell that tale.

In any event, I was still severely jetlagged and overslept the morning of the run. As I was getting ready, I started receiving calls from people about the lack of access to the parking. Some of our sponsors and the band had material to unload and could not.



Fortunately, this year the park required a police officer to be present at the race. Officer Stephen Vineyard was phenomenal organizing traffic and even covered his eyes when runners started going over the curve around the locked gate to get to the parking. It eventually worked out, but it did create some drama at the beginning of the race.

While there were a few differences from last year, we were fortunate to receive several people to help this year again. Miranda Flores and Tanya Reyna who are third year medical students at the University of Texas Southwestern once again helped with the packet pick up the morning of the race.

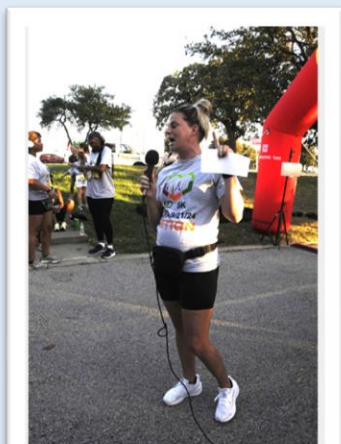
Both Tanya and Miranda have been to HNSB as part of a Global Health activity, and both have produced first-authored manuscripts emanating from their work.

We were also happy to welcome back Brooke Neff who, as usual, was phenomenal as our announcer



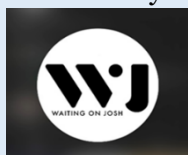
Tanya Reyna and Miranda Flores again assisted with packet pick up the day of the race. They are both Medical Students who have been to Guatemala at HSNB.

and truly a master of ceremony. She started with a good warm up for all the runners and then kept everyone motivated and happy throughout.



Brooke Neff was phenomenal again as the MC of this race for two consecutive years.

Waiting on Josh was again a phenomenal band that came to play and just as last year they were terrific. We will do everything we can to keep all these wonderful people come back to help us with the next race. They were all

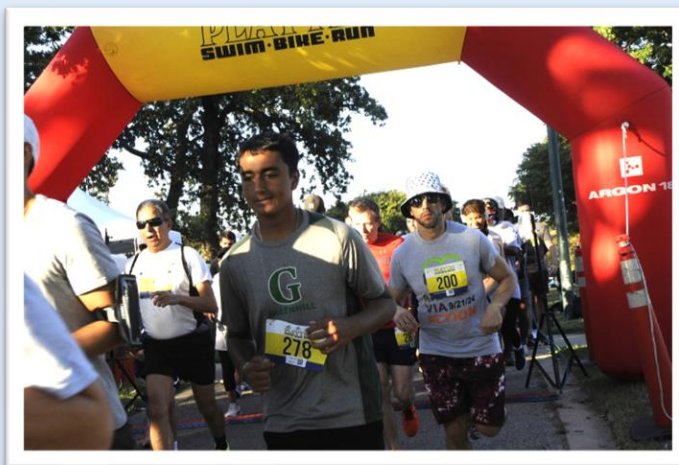


simply amazing. Additionally, we had a number of repeat runners this year. A large number of runners from the VA North Texas Health Cars System and from UT Southwestern were happy to return to run

the race this year. We also had a strong presence from the UTSW Surgery Residency Program.



On race day, other than the challenges that we experienced with the locked gates and the warm temperature (75° F) at the start, it then all fell nicely in place. Everyone seemed happy and enthusiastic about running the race.



Top Finishers Overall						
	Female	Time	Pace	Male	Time	Pace
1	Shirling Tsai	21:53	7:03	Tristan Lesko	16:28	5:18
2	Leah Bullinger	24:34	7:54	Ali Toomes	17:57	5:47
3	Megan Kirby	27:06	8:41	Benjamin Popokh	18:27	5:56

I was very happy to see a few fast runners who came to our AVA 5K race. Tristan Lesko from Wylie, Texas finished with an astonishing time of 16:28 (5:18 min/mile). This was followed by Ali Toomes

and our own medical students from UTSW Benjamin Popokh (#1 overall runner last year). Dr. Tsai, a multiple Boston marathon runner, was not surprisingly the first runner in the women's category overall. Dr. Tsai and I were running together for the first two miles,

but after that she left me in the dust. We were happy to see that our AVA 5K is attracting the attention of fast runners. We are hoping to have them come back next year.

The Numbers

This year we had 272 (vs. 222 in 2023) registrations and 164 (vs. 122 in 2023) runners showed up on race day. This represents a 22.5% (registrations) and 34.5% (runners) increase in just one year. Clearly, we are up to something good!



Dr. Shirling Tsai came #1 in the Female Division overall and Dr. Craig Olson placed #4 overall and #1 for his age group.



Looping back towards the finish line. This picture was taken by Gina's husband Bill Wilson.

It is all thanks to the amazing people who worked tirelessly behind the curtains to make this possible. Especial thanks go to Keisha Hill (Director of Development of AVA), who was excellent with organizing many aspects of the race. Secherre Michaelis, CRNA was pivotal in recruiting amazing volunteers for the race including our Maser of Ceremony (Brooke Neff), who was magnificent just as last year. Gina Wilson, MS, APRN, APN was phenomenal with the logistics of the race as well as raising funds for the organization. What this shows

Cost						
Police (Stephen Vineyard)	Band (Waiting on Josh)	Tents Tables and Chairs	Playtri race production	Park Fees	Medals and t-shirts	TOTAL
\$400.00	\$300.00	\$420.00	\$4,028.15	\$1,250.00	\$4,913.36	\$11,311.51

is that when we all come together with a wonderful cause that helps humanity, seemingly impossible obstacles can be overcome.

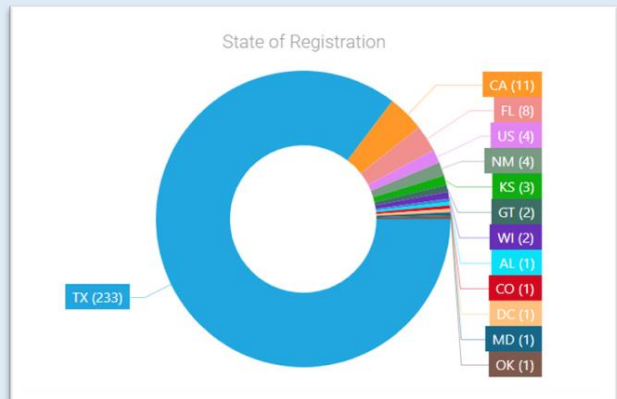
Revenue			
Donations on Playtri Site	Sponsorship Donations	Funds from Registrations	TOTAL
\$3,142.42	\$4,850.00	\$11,114.00	\$19,106.42
NET	\$7,794.91		

We received \$3,142.42 in donations from the runners directly provided in addition to their registration fee. We received \$4,850.00 in sponsorship donations and generated \$11,114.00 from registration fees. This all amounted to a revenue of \$19,106.42. The cost for the race including production by Playtri, band fees, police fees, porta potty rental, park fees, medals and t-shirts was \$11,311.51. Thus, AVA was able to generate **\$7,794.91** (vs. \$6,440.16 in 2023). These funds will be utilized for our upcoming AVA Short Mission Trip in Guatemala in November. This translates into helping the people of Hospital Nacional de San Benito (HNSB) in great need of

AGE GROUP	COUNT	PERCENTAGE
Under 18	38	13.92%
Ages (18 - 29)	40	14.65%
Ages (30 - 39)	64	23.44%
Ages (40 - 49)	69	25.27%
Ages (50 - 64)	46	16.85%
Over 65	16	5.86%
Total	273	100%

health care. Many Children in need of surgical care and adults with substantial prostate problems will greatly benefit from our presence at HNSB this coming November. None could not be possible without the contributions we received.

Of 272 registrants, the youngest was 5-years old. The oldest was 85 years old. We had 50 virtual runners from four different countries (Guatemala,



Brazil, USA, and Japan). We also had virtual runners from 11 different states (11 from California and 8 from Florida). In all, we had a nearly 50/50 gender distribution.

Our Sponsors

We are extremely grateful to all our sponsors this year. Dallas Renal was one of our first sponsors just



as last year. This year they came back with a strong donation as well. Uzziel Valdiviezo with Personal Connection Realty Group has become one of the strongest supporters of the race. LynnDental Care was magnificent. Again, the support from La Lumiere was wonderful.

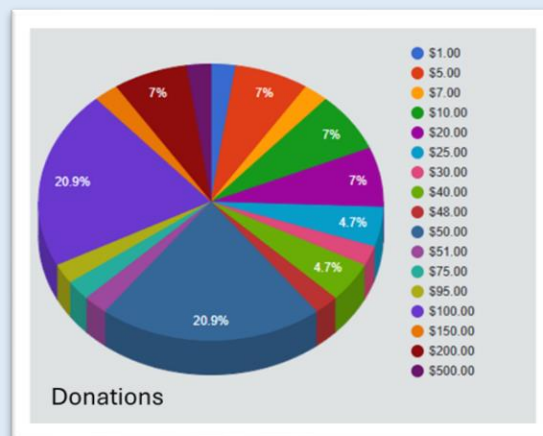


We are also grateful to Fish City Grill, Felicia Jones with Massage Envy, and Tactile Medical. None of what we accomplished would have been possible without their support.



Our Donors

Just as last year, we had a tremendously positive response from donors. We received \$3,142.00 from 43 runners who in addition to their registration fee donated to AVA. This means that 16% of runners helped tremendously to our cause.



Donation Amount	Number of Donations	TOTAL
\$1.00	1	\$1.00
\$5.00	3	\$15.00
\$7.00	1	\$7.00
\$10.00	3	\$30.00
\$20.00	3	\$60.00
\$25.00	2	\$50.00
\$30.00	1	\$30.00
\$40.00	2	\$80.00
\$48.00	1	\$48.00
\$50.00	9	\$450.00
\$51.00	1	\$51.00
\$75.00	1	\$75.00
\$95.00	1	\$95.00
\$100.00	9	\$900.00
\$150.00	1	\$150.00
\$200.00	3	\$600.00
\$500.00	1	\$500.00
Grand Total	43	\$ 3,142.00

2nd Annual AVA 5K Donors

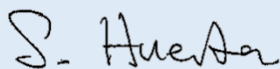
List of donors not in order with the table on the left. *

Jason Robinson, Emily Phung, Aisha Tariq, Clare Savage, Megan Kirby, Katie Mason, Ephraim Ubina, Barbara Haley, Mitchell von Itzstein, Andres Abreu, Shawn Shah, Dennerd Ovando Jr, Joanna McCarthy, Sami Snow, Carla Scott, Dana Riveire, Joshua Weis, Yu Cao, Heather Lanier, Gisella Dettbarn, Betty Lacayo, Nasir Qureshi, Roger Bedimo, Sarah, Nguyen, Bryan Romito, Jared McAllister, Savannah Brock, Michael Hu, Lisa Dao Walker, Betsy Thomas, Senthil Sambandam, Hector Latorre, Elaine Briggs, Brian Walker, Etsuro Umemoto, Patricio Polanco, Robert Hettler, Shirling Tsai, Cesar Ortiz, Jose Lopez, Isamu Tachibana.

I am incredibly grateful to my Board of Directors, especially Gina Wilson and Secherre Michaelis. I am forever in debt to all our sponsors and donors. I can promise you all that your contribution will have direct benefit in improving the lives of many people in need of medical care in Northern Guatemala. I will keep you posted with upcoming newsletters.

It was a great accomplishment overall.

THANK YOU ALL!



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

Our 3rd Annual AVA 5K run will take place Saturday September 27, 2025 @ 8:00 am at Bachman Lake. Registration for the race is already open. Do not forget to register.

I will see you all there!

3rd Annual AVA 5K.

[Register HERE](#)

