

Dottie's House walk raises money, hope

BY KAREN HAMMERDORFER DELANCEY

Correspondent

A survivor of domestic violence says that people living in an abusive relationship should not give up hope.

"There is a safety net," said the woman, who preferred to remain anonymous.

That safety net is Dottie's House, an organization that offers assistance to women and their children who are victims of domestic abuse.

POINT PLEASANT BEACH

On Saturday, 160 people took part in a Family Fun 5K Walk/Run that raised \$16,000 for the nonprofit facility. The number of participants was 65 more than last year.

"There are all forms of domestic violence. You can be physically battered or emotionally battered," said the woman, a resident of Dottie's House. "I was emotionally battered. I was told I was worthless."

Simply put, the decisions in her life were not hers. Her husband controlled everything from her paycheck to where she could work.

"Dottie's House has given me stability and made me secure. If we didn't live there we'd be homeless or in a temporary shelter," said the woman.

The House is a home in that its programs raise self-esteem and offer financial and emotional assistance. The facility is comprised of eight apartments that house eight women and 14 children. Nine more apartments will be built by December.

Debbie Galletta, program director of Dottie's House, said there are currently four families on a waiting list.

"Our goal is to have residents become self-sufficient and break the generational cycle of violence," said Galletta.

Lifeskills include job training, financial and legal counseling, nutrition and parenting tips as well as a domestic violence support group. Residents, who can live at the facility for up to two years, must also visit a licensed therapist.

Participants in Saturday's 5K ranged from weekend walkers to competitive runners.

Eileen Nerlick and her friend Patty Lyons were part of the pack.

"We're walking. We came out to show our support," said Ner-



Top, everyone from serious runners to members of the Toms River High School East Junior Varsity Soccer team took part in the Dottie's House Family Fun 5K event in Point Pleasant Beach. Below, organizers prepare for the Dottie's House Family Fun 5K Walk/Run in Point Pleasant Beach. (PHOTOS: KAREN HAMMERDORFER DELANCEY)

"It gets us up and out on a Saturday morning and it's for a good cause," added Lyons, Point Pleasant.

Thirteen members of the Toms River High School East Junior Varsity Soccer team were also on hand.

"We're supporting Dottie's House. It's a good cause for women and kids," said soccer player Allison Baricko, 15, Toms River.

Runners paid anywhere from \$8 to \$20 to register for the race.

Carol Wolfe, founder, executive director and vice president of Dottie's House, said that many groups (including the Early Act Club of Lanes Mill School in Brick) raised money for the cause. What's more, many runners generously donated cash in addition to paying their registration fee. Numerous sponsors also donated to the cause.

The top male runners were: Gerry Messina (19.21), Steve O'Connor (23.02) and Sal Carreta (23.17); top female runners were Kristen Disoto (25.13), Dana Spafford (25.23) and Thao

