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### Just a day in the (Wissahickon) park for 447 runners

by Dan Gordon and Phil Ranly

Mt. Airy's Helen Cheung was the first woman finisher in the 4th Annual Wissahickon Trail Classic held June 6 in Wissahickon Park. Daryl Weaver of Lancaster County won the race for the second year in a row and set a new course record with a time of 37:14 for the 10-kilometer course. Cheung finished with a time of 44:59, besting her 2008 performance by almost a minute and a half.



Mt. Airy architect Jeff Hayes (left) leads a pack of runners in the 4th Annual Wissahickon Trail Classic. Hayes finished first in his age category and 10th overall. The challenging trail race traversed the upper trails of the Wissahickon Park. A record 447 people completed the 10-kilometer course.

447 runners completed the hilly 10-kilometer course that traversed the winding trails of the Wissahickon Park. For many of the participants, it was their first introduction to the beauty and physical challenge of the Wissahickon gorge. For the event winners, it was another run in the park.

Weaver, who runs for the Rosemont Running Club, won by almost 30 seconds over second place finisher David Roche of Millington, PA. Cheung, who runs for the hometown Wissahickon Wanderers, was also nearly 30 seconds faster than the second place women's finisher, Jennifer Parisi of Pitman, New Jersey.

Now in its fourth year, the annual 10-K race is a showcase race in the U.S. Track and Field Association's off-road series, a collection of sanctioned off-road races in the Delaware Valley. The locals have dubbed it the 'Premier' Trail race in Philadelphia, drawing top talent from throughout Southeastern PA. "Last year was my first time at the Wissahickon Trail Classic," said Weaver. "I really liked the course so I came back again this year."

Weaver does it all. He is a veteran of trail and road races as well as triathlons, adventure races and mountain bike races. He took over the lead about two miles into the course past the first big hill, and then gradually pulled away from the field.

Cheung's victory was especially satisfying. Cheung has run all four Wissahickon Trail Classics, and each year has significantly improved her performance. Three years ago she finished quite far back; two years ago she came in fourth; last year she was second. This year, she finished on top. Since last summer, she has been hampered by a hamstring pull, and this was the first race since the injury where she has been able to pull out all stops. Before her injury, Cheung could be seen regularly running the neighborhoods of Chestnut Hill, and is now once again a regular sight on the streets of Northwest Philadelphia and the trails of the Wissahickon.

"I was worried about my injury at first," Cheung said, "but then you end up concentrating on just not falling, so you forget about it ... The course is very tough. It is hills and hills and hills. The last one up to Andorra was really hard. It was good to know the finish was only a mile away."

Mike Dolan of Media finished first in the men's 40-49 category in a time of 37:43. He was third overall. Jeff Hayes of Mt. Airy finished first in the men's 50-59 division (10th overall) with a time of 41:15.

Lauren Rhatigan of Ship Bottom, New Jersey, won the women's 40-49 age group in a time of 48:20. She was 63rd overall. Bonnie Stoeckl of Pequea, PA, was top finisher in the women's 50-59 division in a time of 56:10.

The trail race is organized by the Wissahickon Wanderers Running Club and the Wissahickon Restoration Volunteers. Complete results and photos can be obtained by going to the club web site [www.wanderersrunningclub.org](http://www.wanderersrunningclub.org).

Proceeds from the race benefit the Wissahickon Restoration Volunteers, a member-supported, volunteer-driven non-profit that actively protects and improves the Wissahickon Valley Park by restoring native habitat. They contribute thousands of volunteer hours planting trees and shrubs and removing invasive plant species. Learn more about the work of WRV at <http://wissahickon.patrails.org/>

The Wissahickon Trail Classic is sponsored by the Wissahickon Wanderers Running Club, a local informal running club that does not charge membership fees and welcomes runners of all ability levels. For information on weekly runs and race reports, visit [www.wanderersrunningclub.org](http://www.wanderersrunningclub.org)