



CHILDREN SMILES

January 2004

WOW! NACoA's 3rd Disney@!!!

NACoA Friends,

For some of us this was the 1st NACoA *Run for the Children*; for others our 2nd or 3rd event. Whatever our history, this was truly an awesome weekend.

As I reflect, I feel a peaceful exhilaration, not simply to be out of the morning cold of Orlando (I still feel it!), but more importantly: I see the faces of charitable friends --old and new-- with broad smiles. I feel the comfort of generosity in their stories about "being here." I hear reserved excitement, anticipating the big event. I see a wonderful, colorful logo everywhere -- on hats, t-shirts, and jackets of folks walking tall on behalf of *The Children*. Though it was cold in Orlando, our NACoA Team was wrapped the entire weekend in warm camaraderie, building with each encounter of NACoA walkers/runners and the pride of their cheerleader families and friends. NACoA is the essence of "Small is Beautiful," my friends.



As a team of athletes, we have so much to be proud of: finishing The Donald® and The Mickey®, and making good on our donation dollars -- a whopping \$100,000+! We are walkers

and runners of all ages, all sizes, with the same enormous commitment of time and energy. Our approximate total in 3 years' efforts, this year including the Detroit Free Press Marathon and the Marine Corps Marathon in Washington D.C., is an amazing \$450,000! Contact Katie if you need help collecting those final contributions.

Our cheerleaders (family, friends, NACoA Board) were fantastic troupers as well, there to support us at every step of the journey.



And the NACoA staff: great marathoners themselves, with all the planning, activities and related work of major events like Disney® '04. The special *Run for the Children* rally and pasta dinner at Epcot,

the Sunday picnic, and all the support throughout the weekend were terrific and without equal.

Sad to say that of the 41 runners at Disney® this year, we lost 4 starters to illness. We missed them, but carried them with us in spirit as we thrilled through the morning.



We all have special and important stories to tell now, each story just as exciting and fantastic as the next. **Janeana White** emailed us about her maverick starting-gate spirit, tempered by wise friends **Anne** and **Gay** who helped her finish sanely. **Sue Moutsatson** kept me standing through a light-headed final mile for The Donald. Newcomer **Leslie Clarke** ran a great 1st Donald, running part way with her training pal (a marathoner who found her in a crowd of 24,000 runners!). **Cheryl Watkins** telephoned me to share her thrill at re-connecting with NACoA and participating in "a life-changing weekend." **Mark Werner**, a former board member, ran the Marine Corps and writes:

I had a wonderful time and am eager to do it again! The crowds, the setting, my fellow runners were all great... this was a wonderful event and one I hope we will continue to support...enter. A life-changing event to run a marathon. Now I want to do it again.

It occurs to me that each of you is now a great motivational trainer! How inspiring for the New Year and our '04 training to hear **our pals' marvelous stories!** **Let's hear from you!!!** What you share will go a long way to help a new NACoA team member in '04.

'04 promises to be an even better year for Team NACoA. We're planning to return to Detroit, the Marine Corps in Washington D.C. and Disney®. We're also working on Palm Beach and Phoenix. So, our folks across the country have plenty of wonderful options to *Run for the Children*.

I'm truly honored to have met each of you: walkers, runners, families, friends, staff, and board. Thank you for another warm and wonderful NACoA memory to endure a lifetime! Bless each and all of you. I hold you gently in my heart.

Keep S-Milin!!



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