

Local



Kayaking volunteer Noah Clay flings away one of many rubber ducks that washed ashore during the 18th annual Duck Derby held Saturday at Lake Lanier Olympic Park. (ALEXANDER POPP)



Ducks zoom across Lanier to deliver rich prize

By Hailey Van Parys

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All it took was two ducks and 10 bucks.

Just two ducks, worth \$5 each, and Janice Carder was walking away with \$10,000.

“I was just so shocked,” Carder said.

The 18th annual Rubber Duck Derby’s winner sent in her \$10 when she got a newsletter from the Boys & Girls Club of Hall County.

Out of all 21,000 rubber ducks that were released into Lake Lanier and raced to the finish line, one of hers won.

The news came as a welcome surprise for Carder, who has been overcoming her battle with cancer.

“The money will go toward covering (medical bills),” she said.

It was one of the first times in years that Dana Miller can recall a grand prize winner being present to accept their big check.

“One couple was here to accept the pontoon boat they won,” Miller said. “They were so happy to win it, they were planning on buying a boat.”

Carder was only one of several winners for the derby’s prizes, which included a one-carat diamond, a Lake Lanier Islands resort getaway passes, Chick-fil-A for two for a year and others.

Kicking off the day was a show by Magic Marc, a magician who traveled six hours to attend the derby and display his talents for the kids.

There also bounce houses, several food vendors like the Cattywampus food truck, Hot Dog Ninja and Kona Ice.

Four ladies made a beeline for the frozen treat when they arrived.

Mom Angie Slaton brought her two daughters Katie and Mary Beth Slaton and her daughter’s friend Shelby Thomas to the event. They traveled an hour from Royston to the race after they heard about it when they were flipping through radio stations.

“We wanted to see what it was all about,” Angie Slaton said. “We were just looking for a Saturday adventure.”

Sandy Katulka brought her daughter Carly Katulka and her daughter’s friend Sloan LaPine to the derby to support her husband Greg Katulka, who is on the council for the derby.

“It’s a great event for the Boys & Girls Club,” Sandy Katulka said.

By the time the race came around, the winds had picked up.

“(The wind) is just what we want for a good race,” Chelsea Clark, event marking and volunteer coordinator for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Hall County, said. “We don’t want to be out here all day.”

And the ducks listened. The race itself lasted only three minutes and 10 seconds before the first duck bobbed through the tube, a quick race in terms of the derby’s history. Some years the ducks can take up to an hour and a half to mosey on down the lake and to the finish line.

This year, some ducks escaped the roped off area and tried to sneak off into the lake for a swim, and volunteers tried to push them back into the designated area.

About 20 winning ducks were picked up by law enforcement officers and taken to the Lake Lanier Olympic Park clubhouse. They picked up extra ones in case the ones they grabbed were unassigned.

Miller said in the past they haven’t had that problem because they have sold out all the ducks that went into the lake. This year they didn’t quite sell out, but they were close, she said.

The event’s diamond sponsor this year was the McKinney-Geib Foundation.

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Grand Prize: \$10,000, Janice Carder of Gainesville

1st Prize: One-carat diamond donated by Gainesville Jewelry, Philip Wilheit Sr. of Gainesville

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3rd Prize: Kipper Tool Prize Pack, Jim Walters of Gainesville

4th Prize: Walt Disney World Resort (4) Hopper Passes, Adriana Sargent of Braselton

5th Prize: Yeti Cooler donated by Hargrove Engineers + Constructors, Christy Moore of Gainesville

6th Prize:– Chick-fil-A for a year for two, RK Whitehead of Gainesville

7th Prize: Four Adventure Tour Passes at North Georgia Canopy Tours, Christy Moore of Gainesville

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