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## Derby draws dreamers to Clark's Bridge Park

Rubber duck race raises funds for Boys & Girls Clubs

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When it comes to the annual Rubber Duck Derby, that wind coming off the lake can work for you or against you.

If anybody knows that, it's Floyd Higdon, who's volunteered at the fundraiser for all 17 years it's been around. He's overseen races that have lasted 15 minutes and others that have gone more than an hour.

While he doesn't have an official title — an apt one might be duck persuader — Higdon is always the guy at the end of the race making sure the floating birds don't get bottlenecked at the finish line.

Saturday afternoon's race at Clark's Bridge Park lasted about 30 minutes before a winning duck was declared.

A barge dumped 20,000 rubber ducks in the lake. A large group of people gathered to watch the toys bob their way to the muddy shores.

Among them: Julie Deaton of Gainesville. She bought four ducks prior to Saturday's race.

"If I win first place, I'm paying off my car," Deaton said. "My old car blew up and I had to get a new one. That \$10,000 would come in handy."

But no such luck for Deaton.

The \$10,000 prize ended up going to Randy Jessup, and the first prize (a one-carat diamond) went to Nathan Yancey.

Neither were present at the time winners were announced.

But Lindsey and Tiffany Wilson of Dawsonville were there to accept their 10th-place prize: four tickets to Zoo Atlanta. "Yeah, this is pretty cool," Tiffany said. "We were shocked we won."

While they didn't end up sponsoring any ducks at Saturday's race, the Testement Family enjoyed some of the other activities at the event. Eight-year-old Katie and Four-year-old Ryan Testement visited a petting zoo, where they got to check out a

pig, a sheep and some roosters.

"It seemed like a good way to spend a Saturday," said James Testement, their father.

Higdon seems to agree. He's been spending Saturdays at the event for 17 years.

"It's for a great cause," Higdon said.

Saturday's race raised more than \$80,000 for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Hall County. Joyce Wilson, vice president of development and marketing, said all the money goes straight back into programs for local youth of the area.

"Every bit of it goes into services for our kids," she said.

Higdon said it seems like the race brings out a bigger crowd every year. He recalls one year when the crowd had to wait nearly an hour and a half for the ducks to mosey their way to the finish line.

That year, he said, they found wayward rubber ducks stuck beneath boat docks and marooned in far-off coves.

"The wind does that sometimes, and you've just got to be patient," Higdon said. "But, I have fun either way. Everybody does."

*A previous version of this article included incorrect information about who won first prize.*

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