

Great Duck Derby fun helps treat the underinsured

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Yellow was The New Black for one exciting, duck-filled afternoon last Sunday at the third annual Great Duck Derby fundraiser in support of Treasure Coast Community Health on the sandy beach at Sebastian's Capt. Hiram's, drawing its usual large crowd. The nonprofit TCCH serves more than 15,000 local adults and children each year, most of whom are at or below the federal poverty level and don't have medical insurance.

Pre-race and on Derby Day, groups and individuals purchased racing ducks, from a single \$5 quacker to an entire flock or even a \$500 Corporate Duck.

Beer sales were brisk – no surprise as temps pushed into the low 90s. At a table near the water sat one of the sponsor groups, Custom Air Systems of Fellsmere, sporting fashionable yellow ball caps with orange bills, black rimmed shades and fuzzy top knots. "This," remarked Curtis Sammons, apparently unable to help himself, "is re-DUCK-ulous!"

Flocks of little kids in dodge-and-weave mode raced through the crowd quacking lustily, thanks to bright yellow, duck-lip-shaped duck calls. As people snapped selfies with the giant ducks floating at water's edge, a pair of olive drab choppers passed by overhead, no doubt keeping the air space free of random duck flights. There was a silent auction featuring uniquely decorated rubber ducks, and grilled hot dogs and burgers were surprisingly popular given the heat.

Again this year, Sea Tow performed official Duck Dumping Duty. Some 10,000 cute little tub ducklings (properly numbered) had been jammed into a big yellow wooden box onboard a Sea Tow vessel. At about Zero Hour minus one, the boat positioned itself off the beach and a group of volunteers and kids began unwinding a long, sausage-shaped float line, creating a giant circle and then pulling it to the finish line to form the racetrack, as spectators watched from shore and along the piers.

At last, to the iconic bugle call to post, the yellow box was opened and 10,000 little yellow racers tumbled out into the lagoon and a great quack rose from the crowd. Aided by volunteers shoveling them out of the box and swooshing the water on either side of the track to keep 'em moving along, the yellow mob headed for the finish line.



Finnegan (age 5) getting ready to help release the ducks.

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This year's first, second and third winners were Lyn Bartholomew, Dobbs Keesling and Jon Lee.

The bobbing racers were dragged to shore, still within the confines of the raceway, whereupon a bunch of little kids jumped in amongst them, as phone cams snapped away. Post-race, volunteers scooped the soggy quackers into baskets and hauled them away to dry out and do whatever rubber ducks do, until next year.