

They're off and running!

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Record crowds are expected this year for the four races sponsored by the McArthur YMCA at the 47th Annual Isle of Eight Flags Shrimp Festival. Festivities begin at 8 a.m. Saturday, May 1, on Main Beach for:

- the 16th Annual YMCA 5K Run,
- the 1.5-Mile Walk,
- the Katie Caples Memorial one-mile run for youth aged 12 and under, and
- the Popcorn Shrimp half-mile run for children under eight.

Last year's races brought out more than 900 runners, so the YMCA's Vice President/Nassau, Amy Kienle, is expecting about 1,000 participants this year.

"Breaking 1,000 in 2010' is kind of our motto this year," she said. "It's going to be a lot of fun! We will have live entertainment again this year, and lots of fun for kids."

A chip system, which debuted at last year's races, will be used to score the race. Attached to every runner's shoelace, the chips increase accuracy and speed up the gathering of results.

Runners will receive a gift bag and commemorative T-shirt, as well as free massages and a yoga stretch, fruit from Winn-Dixie and Food Lion and water from Publix before the event.

Participants can register for all Run/Walk events online at www.active.com or download an entry form from the YMCA Web site, www.firstcoastYMCA.org. Fees are:

- \$27 for the 5K Run and 1.5-Mile Walk,
- \$15 for the Katie Caples Run, and
- \$12 for the Popcorn Shrimp Run.

Registration information is available at the McArthur YMCA by calling (904) 261-1080.



Entrants who are pre-registered by April 29 can pick up their race packets at the McArthur YMCA at 1915 Citrona Drive in Fernandina Beach from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Friday, April 30, or at 7 a.m. at Main Beach on the day of the race.

The top male and female finishers in the 5K will win a plaque and a complimentary three-day, two-night stay for two in an oceanfront room at the Amelia Inn on Amelia Island Plantation. Medals also will be awarded for the first-, second- and third-place male and female finishers in each category. All of the youth run participants will receive a shrimp necklace.

Proceeds from the events benefit Nassau County children through the YMCA's Strong Kids Program.

"Last year the program provided services and programs to more than 600 children who would otherwise be unable to join the Y," Kienle said. "We want to continue that tradition and help even more children in the coming year."