

NexLAN/Kennekuk Kids XC program finishes another record-setting year
By *Tabitha Miller*

As the whistle is raised, tenseness fills the air. Glances shoot back and forth at the starting line. The only sound that can be heard is the thumping of every runner's beating heart, waiting with anticipation. The whistle pierces the silence. "And they're off!" Screams and shouting echo in the air as 410 NexLAN Kennekuk Kids race to the finish line on the biggest night of the summer.

NexLAN Kennekuk Kids, a free summer running program held at Lincoln Park in Danville, IL, started with an average of 32 runners per week, 12 years ago. The race now has to constantly expand to meet the demands of new runners that are attracted each year.

Over 599 children participated in the NexLAN Kennekuk Kids program this year. Runners from Illinois, Indiana, North Carolina, Wisconsin, Tennessee, and even Denmark joined together to compete against each other and more importantly, themselves. With an average of 390 runners per week, compared to 370 average runners in 2003, the program seems to be growing and evolving each year.

"It's not only healthy but fun and a great way to make friends." said Beth Miller, a founder of the program along with her husband, Robin Miller. "It's great to see the kids really out there having fun and how great it is that everyone gets so involved, this event couldn't happen if it weren't for the parents, our great volunteers, and our sponsors." Parents and friends were present, supporting the runners 100% with the only stipulations that a supporter cannot push, pull, drag a runner across the course, and possibly hitchhiking would be a problem.

170 gallons of refreshments, 2,735 ribbons, and 3000 popsicles later, trophy night was held on August 2nd, 2004. 426 trophies were rewarded to bright eyed and deserving kids. 159 of those children earned perfect season trophies.

NexLAN Kennekuk Kids expects even greater years to come and would like to send out a huge thanks to all the devoted volunteers, supportive parents, and sponsors.

This year's sponsors included:

NexLAN Network Experts, CC MSI, Sheryl and Dave Krohne, Arthur and Helen Skoog Family, Faulstich Printing, Country Companies (gave away about 500 shirts), Rahn Equipment, Mettam Safety, American Pavilion, Danville Metal Stamping, Pepsi, Gailey Eye Clinic, Wendy's, Bud's Car Stereo and Cellular, Aqua Illinois, CCL Custom Manufacturing, Wolf Creek Golf Club, and Ceramics by Pauline