

# Hundreds walk, run for Via

**ORGANIZER SAYS** warm weather brought strong turnout.

**BY JD MALONE**  
The Express-Times

**BETHLEHEM** | Donald Laudenslager stepped Sunday across the finish line of the 5k walk event of the Lehigh Valley Hospital Marathon for Via beneath the Hill-to-Hill Bridge and was greeted by a few of his teammates.

“We’re Donny’s Big Dogs,” Laudenslager’s uncle Mike Lilly said of the team that included Laudenslager’s aunt Carol Lilly and dad, Keith. “He’s our team captain. He’s my little buddy.”

Laudenslager, 14, of Bath, has Down syndrome and receives services from Via of the Lehigh Valley. The Lillys and Laudenslagers beamed as the family that brought in \$1,200 in pledges for the walk rested in the shade after the 5k hike through the city.

“It was a nice turnout,” Carol Lilly said.

Via of the Lehigh Valley is a nonprofit organization that provides assistance to developmentally disabled children and adults.

| PLEASE SEE TURNOUT, B2

## THE WINNERS

Visit [lehighvalleylive.com](http://lehighvalleylive.com) to see which teams finished first in the Lehigh Valley Hospital Marathon for Via.



EXPRESS-TIMES PHOTO | JOE GILL

Sarah Grossman leads the Freedom High School fife and drum corps across the Monocacy Creek in Bethlehem during the Lehigh Valley Hospital Marathon for Via. For video of Sunday’s event, visit [lehighvalleylive.com](http://lehighvalleylive.com).

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Monday, September 08, 2008

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Donald Laudenslager agreed as the 450 or so registered walkers flooded the parking lot, drinking water, eating Panera Bread handouts and leading dogs on leashes.

Ashley Madea, a Lehigh University student majoring in special education, helped Lauren Haberern water Oscar, a red, 5-month-old mini dachshund that walked at least a mile of the course.

"We cheated a little," Haberern said, admitting she carried the little guy once he got tired.

Via special event assistant Gina Stano said Sunday's mild, sunny weather contributed to the tremendous turnout for the walk and marathon. The marathon, which snaked along the Lehigh River from Allentown to Easton, attracted more than 1,400 runners -- better than 10 times last year's attendance, Stano said.

"We couldn't have asked for a better day," Stano said.

Timothy Tatkovsky, walking as part of a team from St. Luke's Hospital, brought his two daughters, Rebecca Tatkovsky and Shelby Benner. The girls said the walk was tough and next year they hope to tackle the 26.2 miles of the marathon.

Pujo, a black, 2-year-old pug, didn't make it far on the course, but owner Julie Williams gave him a treat anyway. Williams works at Wegmans, which was an event sponsor. She has co-workers and friends who have Down syndrome.

"I'm walking for them," Williams said.

Bart Bartholomew, his wife, Christine, and their black-and-tan Doberman pinscher, Doobie, found out about the walk Friday.

"We run almost every day, so we said, 'We might as well run there,'" Bartholomew said. "And it's for a great cause."

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