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VERO BEACH NEWSWEEKLY

Rubber ducks 'race' to raise funds



Photos by Fran Foster Treasure Coast Community Health controller Ben Broom, director of community outreach Moses Santos, facilities manager Brian Townsend and volunteer Fred Garzarelli with the 'big' ducks at the Great Duck Derby fundraiser.

By Fran Foster, The Newsweekly

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The Indian River Lagoon was overtaken by nearly 1,500 yellow rubber ducks that were launched outside Captain Hiram's sandbar beach in Sebastian for a colorful "race" to the finish line.

The Great Duck Derby is a fundraising event for Treasure Coast Community Health with proceeds benefiting low-income adults and children in need of affordable healthcare.

Supporters of the TCCH purchased the cute rubber duckies,

ranging in price from \$5 to \$2500. A few days before the race, volunteers placed a numbered tag on the bottom of each duck that identified the purchaser. As soon as the ducks hit the water, their excited sponsors began yelling encouragement from the finish line.

The first three finishers were awarded cash prizes.

First-prize winner Kathy Hainey was thrilled to have won the race — but for reasons other than her own financial gain. She and her husband Eric recently had a life-changing event.

"Our brother-in-law had a massive heart attack — including being declared clinically dead — but survived," she explained. "We plan on giving the prize money to him to help with expenses."

TCCH CEO Vicki Soule sported her duck hat and whistle all day. She was overjoyed with the tremendous support from the community.

"It was a very successful event and everyone had a great time," she said. "It's the type of event that requires a lot of volunteers, as well as all of the staff and supporters of TCCH. They came out in full force to make it a beautiful experience for all."

Treasure Coast Community Health serves more than 16,000 adults and children per year, an overwhelming percentage of whom are at or below the federal poverty level. Many of these individuals do not qualify for insurance and rely on Treasure Coast Community Health to provide needed medical and dental services at reduced cost.

For more information, visit their website at www.tcchinc.org or call 772-257-8224.

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