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Tribute to her memory

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The Journal News

Fun Run-Walk helps nonprofit for slain White Plains student

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ELMSFORD - Kristen Bonistall recalled the morning runs she used to take with her younger sister, Lindsey.

"As she was the more athletic sister, she would always end up losing me in the first two or three blocks," Kristen, 23, told family, friends, classmates and supporters yesterday. "But she always came back to find me."

On a chilly fall morning drenched with sunshine, hundreds of runners and walkers turned out to pay tribute to Lindsey Bonistall, a 20-year-old White Plains resident and 2003 Good Counsel Academy graduate who was found dead May 1 at her off-campus apartment complex near the University of Delaware, where she studied biology. A man who lived a block away and has a long criminal history was arrested five weeks later, charged with murder after a DNA match linked him to the killing.

But the focus yesterday was not on her death. Instead, the 20th annual Fun Run-Walk at Court Sports was dedicated this year to the Lindsey M. Bonistall Foundation PEACE OUTside Campus, formed by her family to promote peaceful and safe living environments in off-campus college communities nationwide.

Glenn Staub of White Plains, a personal trainer at Court Sports for 18 years, came up with the idea for the event not long after Bonistall's death. Though he didn't know her, Staub said, he was inspired by Bonistall to make the event a celebration of her life and worked closely with her family to make it happen.

"I just felt it was so important to do something," Staub said before the start of the three-mile run around the Cross Westchester Executive Park. "I wanted to make a contribution by recognizing her, and I couldn't think of a better way to do it than by this event."

More than 600 people took part, including over 100 walk-up registrants. Those who knew Bonistall best remembered their friend as an energetic and enthusiastic person who embraced life and always wore a smile.

Dozens of cheerleaders, including Bonistall's former squad from Good Counsel, rallied runners beforehand. A squad from Gym Cats Gym in Yonkers, coached by a former teammate of Bonistall's, wore T-shirts that read "Half My Heart, Half My Soul for Lindsey."

The night before, about 15 of Bonistall's friends from home and from college gathered at the Mamaroneck home of longtime friend Jill Krieger. Lindsey would have loved seeing all her friends together like that, said Krieger, 20. Others agreed the gathering, like the next day's run-walk, would have meant a lot to her.

"I could just picture her there thinking how awesome it was that everyone was together in the same room," said Megan Isol, 21, of Bridgewater, N.J.

Added Leigh Tetor, 21, of Poconos, Pa.: "Lindsey always brought people together."

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How to help

Bonistall's parents and sister established the PEACE OUTside Campus, the Lindsey M. Bonistall Foundation, to promote safe living conditions off-campus in college communities across the country. The foundation is still pursuing status as a 501(c)(3) charitable corporation and therefore cannot yet accept donations. Until then, those wishing to contribute are asked to provide contact information via e-mail to rememberlindsey@yahoo.com. In the meantime, to learn more about the foundation, visit www.rememberlindsey.com.

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