

Hundreds turn out for inaugural meet, memorial for Dr. Daniel Cepero

BY DAVID J. LEE
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As Heather Woods ran Saturday in a track and field meet at Ratliff Stadium, her thoughts weren't far from the doctor who saved her life years ago.

Woods and about 350 other children participated Saturday in the second day of the Dr. Daniel 'Danny' Cepero Memorial Track and Field Meet, in honor of the Odessa pediatrician who died Nov. 25, 2003, at the age of 43.

"He was my doctor when I was little," Heather, 14, said. "I had bad pneumonia, and he saved my life. I'm running to remember him, to thank him."

Cepero was a pediatrician, known for dedicating his life to helping the well-being of children in Odessa and the Permian Basin. His father, Dr. Rafael Cepero, was one of the founding doctors of Women's and Children's Hospital, now Odessa Regional Hospital.

Stella Neboh, an organizer of the inaugural track and field meet, said Cepero was a big advocate of running and keeping children active.

"He would always tell us, 'to run is fun and healthy for everyone involved,'" she said. "He was a champion of kids. He was always doing for children. He was an advocate of keeping children busy all summer long — to keep them active and off the television and GameBoy."

Cepero had practiced since 1990 in Odessa, and during that time had

been a large contributor to the West Texas Track Club, Neboh said.

Neboh, who is with the West Texas Track Club, said she was impressed with the turnout to the inaugural event in honor of her children's doctor.

"It's just amazing," she said. And though she called the turnout amazing, she said it didn't surprise her.

"We have children running today who were his patients," she said. "Look at my kids. If one of them called him and said, 'I need you at this sporting event at 8 in the morning,' he was there."

"And it wasn't just my children but all of his patients," Neboh said. "He was there for them."

Heather said that was one of the things she remembered most about the doctor.

"He cared for us — he just cared," she said.

Dr. Ralph Cepero, Dr. Danny's brother, said he was also honored by the event.

"I think it's a wonderful idea," he said. "He was a big supporter of the summer track program. He wanted to keep kids healthy and active in the summer."

Ralph Cepero even participated in the meet himself. He and staff members Barbie Watson, Diana Roach and Marie Armendariz ran a relay race against Dr. Abdul Khadir and his staff members Juanita Carrasco, Maricella Cortez and Melissa Stark.

"This is just a good family event," Ralph Cepero said.

'I had bad pneumonia, and he saved my life. I'm running to remember him, to thank him.'

HEATHER WOODS
Participant



CINDEKA NEALY/ODESSA AMERICAN

Tylan McCalaster, 6, of Monahans, takes first place in the 100-yard-dash Saturday during the inaugural Dr. Daniel Cepero Memorial Track and Field Meet at Ratliff Stadium.

WHAT'S MORE

>> The inaugural Dr. Daniel 'Danny' Cepero Memorial Track and Field Meet was more than just a commemoration. It was the first Amateur Athlete Union track meet in Odessa.

>> Eugene Neboh, an organizer of the meet, said it's a part of the Junior Olympics, which has had famous athletes such as Shaquille O'Neal participate.

>> Dr. Ralph Cepero said winners of the two-day Odessa meet have a chance to go to a state competition in San Antonio and perhaps to a national event in Orlando.