

THE NORTHSIDE CHRONICLE

- May 2025, Volume 41, Issue 5 -

May 2025

The Northside Chronicle

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Steel City Duck Derby returns to Allegheny Commons Park

By Carson Folio | Staff Writer

More than 9,000 rubber ducks overtook Lake Elizabeth in Allegheny Commons Park on April 26 to race against each other in the annual Steel City Duck Derby.

The duck derby, which has taken place annually since 2022, and mimics similar duck races held in cities such as Topeka, Kans and Glendale, Calif since 1988 with similar goals to raise money for a non-profit organization.

In Pittsburgh, money raised by the duck derby for McKees Rocks-based Partners of Quality goes into funding the Allegheny Children's Initiative, a program to support families and children with behavioral challenges, residential support to families with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities via Citizen's Care, travel opportunities for those with disabilities via Exceptional Adventures and more support services.

Greg Jena, executive director of communications at Partners of Quality, said the Steel City Duck Derby was started as a fun way to get eyes on the organization and give people something interesting to look forward to.

"We were looking for something new and different and, most importantly, something that could involve the whole community," Jena said. "We heard about duck derbies in other cities and we thought, 'let's bring it to Pittsburgh.'"

According to Jena, the first duck derby was smaller, with only 5,000 ducks launched, but the event has grown more popular every year.

"It's become a good fundraiser for us because it helps the people we support," Jena said. "It really brings the community together and gives families young and old something to do for the day."

The first place prize winner of this year's derby, Kristy McElinnny of Coraopolis, took home \$2,000 and celebrated along with her family. Lisa Sontheimer of Canonsburg won second place, taking home \$1,000.



Photo by Matthew Koscienski

A flock of 10,000 rubber ducks were plunged into Lake Elizabeth in Allegheny Commons Park for the fourth Annual Steel City Duck Derby on April 26. The derby is a fundraiser that benefits Partners of Quality, a non-profit which supports the Allegheny Children's Initiative.

Organizers got their rubber ducks in a row and, after what they call intensive training for the rubber ducks, will take all 10,000 to another duck race in the United States.

Before the thousands of ducks descended onto Lake Elizabeth, organizers read a proclamation from City

Council member Bobby Wilson, who serves much of the Northside, declaring April 26, 2025 as Steel City Duck Derby day and commending Partners for Quality for its service to those in need.

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Organizers hope to grow Duck Derby

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Jonny Hartwell, a morning show host on 94.5 3WS radio, said he was thankful for the turnout and the weather cooperating with the duck derby.

"I don't know who to thank for keeping the rain away, but whoever did, you did a great job," Hartwell said.

Several Northside businesses sponsored and were present at the Duck Derby, with the biggest sponsor of the event being North Shore Tavern.

The organizers of the Duck Derby said they hope to make the event continue next year, saying it grows in attendance and size each year. In the end, they said it's not about the ducks but rather how to best support those in need. ■