

# Yellow Ribbon 5K race attracts 250 to campus event

## Race honors soldiers, raises scholarship money

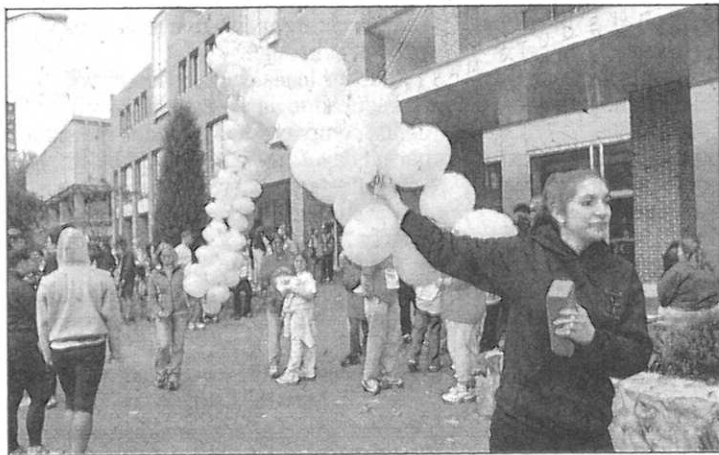
BY BETH VELLIQUETTE

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CHAPEL HILL — As Adam Blocker crossed the finish line in first place, he gasped for air and bent over to try to catch his breath.

A UNC student and a former paratrooper from Fort Bragg, Blocker, 31, ran in the Yellow Ribbon 5K race on the UNC campus Saturday for his old army buddies in Iraq and his brother who is serving in the African nation Djibouti.

"A lot of my friends are in Iraq right now," he said. "It's a morale booster. My heart goes



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**Mary Soisson (right), a UNC senior, leads a yellow balloon archway toward the starting line for the race Saturday.**

out to all the soldiers."

Blocker wasn't the only person with military connections to run in the race to raise money

for scholarships for spouses and children of soldiers killed in action in Iraq and Afghanistan. ROTC students, former Marines

and the sons and daughters of members of the military also ran.

Jack Freeland, a UNC student and former Marine, said running in the race was the least he could do to support the troops.

It was great to see so many people turn out for the race, Freeland said. "I thought it was awesome," he said.

The race was sponsored by Carolina Troop Supporters, a new student organization at UNC and N.C. State that was founded to show appreciation to U.S. Armed Forces. It paired up with an organization called Children of Fallen Soldiers Relief Fund that provides college assistance for surviving children and spouses. Organizers estimated about 250 people ran in the race.

Rebecca Campbell of Mary-

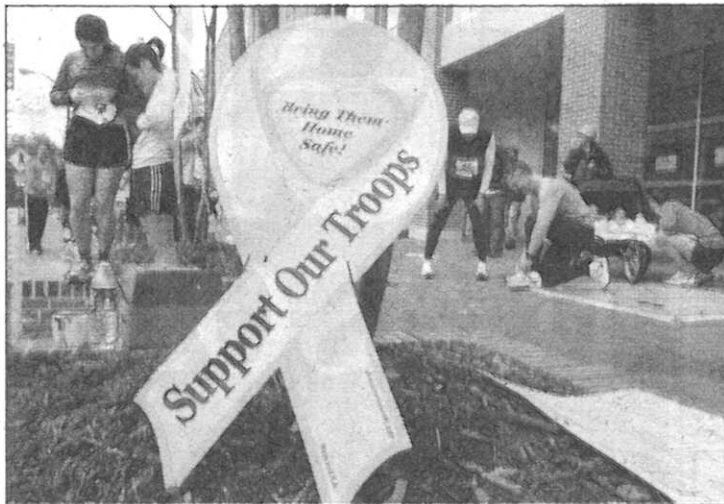
land founded the Children of Fallen Soldiers Relief Fund last October. Although the fund has held several events in the Washington and Maryland area where she lives, the 5K race at UNC was the first event outside that area, she said.

Some soldiers and officers who recently returned from serving in the Middle East came up from Fort Bragg for the race, she said. "We have guys who just came back on Monday," she said.

Following the race, runners were invited to listen to a live band, eat lunch and hear a few speeches near South Building. "It's been a lot of work," Campbell said. "We've been working on this for five months. We're very, very happy with the first

see **TROOPS** | page 16

LOCAL



The yellow ribbon "Support Our Troops" sign rests against a tree as participants in the Yellow Ribbon 5K race stretch and run to warm up. Not all the runners had a direct link to the military, but showed their support by participating.

# TROOPS

FROM PAGE 1

one." The Fund plans to hold more Yellow Ribbon 5K races at college campuses throughout the country, Campbell said. "We're going to do one in Georgia in May," she said. "Without the help of students, we could never do it."

Chastity Cassada, a UNC graduate who ran in the race, said she did so to support people like her father. He served in the army and recently retired as a military police officer, she said. Being the child of a soldier, she knows that the families of soldiers often sacrifice the most for freedom, she said.

"I think it's a good turnout," Cassada said. "I would love to see more people because the cause is so worth it. I hope to see this become even better in the future," she said.

Not everyone had a direct link to the military, but they wanted

to show their support, too. Tracy Smith, a UNC law student, flew to Baltimore recently and was on a plane surrounded by young men who were headed to Iraq, she said. "The soldiers I was sitting near, they impressed me," Smith said.

"They were so excited to go," Smith said. "They're going to be gone a year, and they don't know if they'll even be back in a year. This is basically a way to say, 'Thank you.'"



The Yellow Ribbon 5K run got under way at the intersection of South Road and Raleigh Street on Saturday morning. About 250 people participated in the event, the first such race to be held outside the Washington area.

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