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Fire can't halt fundraising run

Irish Eyes Restaurant will host, sponsor Blue-Gold All-Star 5K

By KEVIN TRESOLINI, The News Journal

For the time being, there is no Irish Eyes Pub & Restaurant in Lewes.

But there will be a Blue-Gold All-Star 5K sponsored by and held from the once-popular gathering place's site, just as there has been each of the past three years.

The fourth annual race is June 16 and benefits the Delaware Foundation Reaching Citizens with Cognitive Disabilities, the charity many First State residents are familiar with because of June's annual Blue-Gold all-star high school football game.

The race has raised about \$7,500 for DFRC in its first three years, said Jerry McNesby, a DFRC board member and runner who helped found the 5K.

And the race will go on.

"We're not people who sit back and say, 'Oh, this tragedy happened,'" said Irish Eyes part-owner Tom Jones, an avid runner. "We're moving forward, and that's why we want to do the race."

"We've always done things with DFRC. Why let them down? They're the bigger picture than we are. My wife [Charlene] is a special education teacher, so there's a special place in our hearts for DFRC."

A March 26 arson fire leveled the restaurant, which is being rebuilt. There are other Irish Eyes in Milford and Rehoboth Beach (a Middletown location was recently sold).

The only difference in this year's race, Jones said, is that



Firefighters battle the blaze at Irish Eyes Pub & Restaurant in Lewes on March 26. Though the restaurant burned down, it will continue to sponsor the Blue-Gold All-Star 5K, to be held June 16.

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The only difference in this year's race, Jones said, is that prerace and postrace activities will take place underneath temporary tents rather than inside the restaurant's walls.

"It's all about DFRC and doing what we would normally do," Jones said. "We've been in business for 20 years, but we're not just a business, we're a family. We're also Irishmen, so we're proud and we're survivors. Having this race is our thing."

The Blue-Gold All-Star 5K is part of the Seashore Striders Summer Series. There were 225 runners last year, said race director Ed Osienski, who expects as many as 300 this year.

Among the community organizations that have stepped in to lend a hand with various aspects of the race are Southern Delaware Physical Therapy, Southern Delaware School of the Arts and the Children's Beach House.

"When I heard about the fire, my first thought was, 'What are we going to do?' I thought it was going to be moved," Osienski said. "But Tom's and Charlene's attitude was, we want to have everything here. And this was six hours after they just went through this devastating fire. I was really surprised, and I was ecstatic, too."