

Moozie at 25th Annual Mercy Franklin Classic on September 2, 2024

CKN's summary report, from Trish Cronin and Vic Legerton

Overview: For the second consecutive year, following Director Bob Rudman's initial connection of our two nonprofit organizations, Children's Kindness Network (CKN) committed to participate in local partner Mercy Community Healthcare's (MCH) annual Labor Day "Franklin Classic" race event. This year's event celebrated the race's 25th anniversary. Franklin Classic attracts over 2,000 individuals and raises funds for the integrated healthcare organization that focuses on the underserved. The event, held downtown Franklin, offers early-morning 10K, 5K, (and combo 15K), and 1 K "Kids" race within an upbeat, family-friendly atmosphere. The race is a Labor Day tradition for many local families. The square is lined with generously spaced vendor sponsors and other organizations offering support, snacks, inspiration and fellowship.

Mercy organization support and logistics: In April, Raye MacDonald, Director of Events & Outreach, reached out to CKN to check on planned participation at their community events again this year. We confirmed Moozie would be at the July 12th Back to School Bash (run by Elaine Myers, Community Outreach Specialist) and September 2nd Franklin Classic (coordinated overall by Raye aided by Emily Hoch, Events & Marketing Assistant). The Mercy contacts were, as usual, enthusiastic and appreciative of CKN's participation. As the Franklin Classic event date approached, Emily provided vendor booth information including a detailed map of each organization's table site. Information highlighted the new Franklin City safety policy for pop-up vendor tents, that requires a minimum of 40 pounds of weights (subsequently purchased by CKN) for each canopy leg. This year, Mercy also requested that vendors bring their own tables and chairs. We were able to receive, based on pre-race request, one table and a chair from Mercy. The Moozie's station was amply equipped because Bob Rudman kindly lent two tables and two chairs, secured in advance. Thorough guidelines, event-day vendor check-in, and ability to receive any applicable help contributed to a relatively simple arrival and set-up. Mercy staff/volunteers and city personnel were organized and helpful, resulting in a streamlined process of bringing cars for unloading at the designated Kids Zone (5:15-5:45 am), setting up exhibits, conveniently parking, and similarly tearing down exhibits and loading cars brought to the area at 10:00 am event conclusion. Through the entire festive event, CKN/Moozie was not "lost in the crowd." Moozie (Vic) was quite visible, with CKN one of just three organizations in the highly attended Kids Zone. Moozie also appeared at race starts, providing enthusiastic waves and high fives for entrants as they took off. The event announcers as well as radio media made frequent mention of Moozie and the CKN activity table throughout the morning.

Table interactions: CKN's exhibit area was comfortably positioned between the very popular *Fantasy Face Artistry* (facepainting by the incredibly kind Dan Klepper) and *We Rock the Spectrum* (Franklin's inclusive children's gym franchise newly owned by Andrea and husband, inspired by experience with their four-year-old son who has special needs). Flanking Moozie's booth were, on one side, a continuous queue of excited children lining up for facepainting, and on the other, multiple spinning hula hoops that had been laid out by WRTS. These children and families also visited Moozie, a prime attraction. Even when Moozie was not at the tables, the cow-print tables and bright signs, or past views of Moozie, drew many to our booth. Fortunately, the event's morning weather was excellent for all attendees (including Mascot Moozie): overcast and cool (high 60's, reaching low/mid 70's), with lingering light humidity.

CKN had two tables, with small applicable signs, set up, respectively for (1) Moozie team interactions with visitors; sticker, It's Easy to Be Kind wristband, and Cow Wisdom mini-book giveaways, and (2) displayed merchandise for sale and accompanying bucket for cash proceeds/donations. The third Moozie table was set up with supplies (card stock, crayons/markers, felt hearts and glue sticks) for children's making cards for seniors in Nashville nursing home. Although cardmaking was limited, those (young girls) who participated were "all-in."

There were hundreds of interactions with Moozie area visitors. CKN representatives (Moozie/Vic and Trish along with [expert] Sandy Williams and [first-time] Scott Schultz volunteers) had many brief, friendly greetings with children. Generally, these exchanges were about and/or with Moozie or centered on the child's: interest in Moozie stickers (if young), comments on how plushy and cute Moozie puppet was and desire to hold her (typically 5–11-year-old girl), or race completion with CKN's congratulations (typically boy/girl of that age or slightly older).

Even more prevalent were conversations with parents and other adults. Many individuals were genuinely touched by CKN's practices and mission through Moozie. Several parents took pictures of Moozie with their children, and they were happy to have CKN take photos for Moozie social media and website. Perhaps in part due to cooperative weather and easy environment (or downtime between their/family members' running a race), many took the time to listen/share thoughtfully, often lighting up, during discussions about Moozie, the importance of instilling kindness, and potential Moozie engagements. Compared to last year, there seemed to be a few more attendees who knew of Moozie. Several parents mentioned they'd like to see Moozie in WCS classrooms. Attendees did not seem to have/offer business cards, and there was not a networking orientation. Nonetheless, given some of the fruitful conversations, there were a few interesting leads for Moozie engagement and potential ideas/opportunities for future CKN follow-up.

Other observations, opportunities:

- Most event vendors were not selling merchandise yet offered provisions to collect tips/donations. Participants, who had risen early and were focused mostly on the race and enjoying the surrounding scene with their families, generally were not in buying/paying mode. However, as parents with children made time to become familiar with Moozie, some were open to considering merchandise and supporting the cause. **CKN's availability of items for sale, in low key manner, and cash collection bucket, seemed fitting.** Most popular was the Moozie 'plushie' (as all referenced it, while learning it also a hand puppet feature). Wristband giveaways were of interest to nearly all adults and [age appropriate] children; nearly all who approached the table helped themselves and put on the bands, when invited. It did not seem there would have been interest if wristbands were not free. Cow Wisdom mini books were also favored, predominantly by women and older girls, as usual.
- During Vic/Trish's lovely conversation with two women runners about Moozie's effectiveness in teaching/reinforcing kindness in children, one of the women, a teacher at **Christ Presbyterian Academy (CPA)** on Old Hickory Blvd, took Trish's card and assured she would share it within CPA for their potential follow-up to engage Moozie in the younger classes. The other lady, a **Franktown** volunteer, asked if we have connected with that nonprofit. Upon Trish's mentioning that an earlier preliminary contact (Brandon and wife) seemed of recent to be less accessible when we've reached out, the volunteer concurred and noted some recent changes in management. She suggested connecting with Executive Director Chris Barnhill and seeing if there might be a way for Moozie to help with the younger children relative to enhancing social-emotional skills in these underserved youth.
- **Ryan Barfield, father of Kalya** who won first place among second graders in Moozie '22-'23 kindness essay contest, ran back to connect with us when he spotted the Moozie exhibit and a familiar face. During enthusiastic chat sessions, including when he brought Kayla to see us post race, Ryan offered to follow up with **Hunter's Bend Elementary School** guidance counselor on CKN's behalf. When hearing that traction is slow to engage WCS schools in Moozie program, Ryan mentioned that he and his wife Andrea know the counselor very well given the counselor's coordination of a gifted program experience for Kayla. He seemed happy to pass on Trish's card and encourage Moozie's visiting WCS Hunters Bend classrooms. This would address a priority for CKN and possibly lead to Moozie activity at additional WCS elementary schools.
- Andrea, the **We Rock the Spectrum** owner, kindly chatted with Trish as she/others managed their event play space. Andrea noted she would welcome discussing CKN's (like other nonprofits) potential use of the gym if ever of interest for CKN event/program. And she would be open to discussing potential Moozie engagements, as Trish suggested, with children at the gym.
- Runner, fitness lead, dedicated Board member of 50-year-old, national multi-chapter **The Compassionate Friends (TCF)** organization (in honor of her eldest son who left this world at age 19), inspirational writer, and grandmother **Pamela Hagens** made a second-year return for another extensive Moozie booth visit and discussions with Vic and Trish. Her granddaughter diligently created a card. Pamela finds that Moozie and her kindness messages resonate strongly for her. She is a positive-thinking, energetic, strong woman of deep faith who continually helps others in their pain and challenges, particularly through their grief. Pamela and lovely nine-year-old granddaughter Adliyah were the last to leave our booth at closing (while Pamela's husband/sons waited patiently). Later that day, Pamela sent race event photos and some of her written inspirations to Vic and Trish, inspiring us to keep in touch with her in the spirit of kindness and common values.
- A woman not associated with the race but in town for business purposes, approached the booth with great interest in learning about our organization, cow theme and "Moozie" references that she noticed as she walked through the event zone. She and her husband arrived in Franklin the prior night for her husband to purchase/obtain a herd of cows for their large family-held **Florida dairy farm** (where they lived). She and Trish had a good conversation, addressing her interest in Moozie. The woman seemed touched by CKN's children's kindness mission which she

emphasized was very important and relevant. She clearly held in high regard integrity, kindness, and family values which she said marked their company. She was interested in our mascot, background, and scope. Trish told her that CKN, a small nonprofit, would love to hear any thoughts she had about her farm's potential sponsorship and/or affiliation with Moozie. She accepted Trish's card and looked pensive. It would be interesting to hear from her in the future and/or to possibly track her down (unfortunately without any names/contact information).

- **Dr. Pam Ertel from MTSU Early Childhood Education Department** (where CKN was guest speaker in the spring) attended the event with her husband Dan who was running in keeping with his annual tradition. We had very pleasant chats. We also confirmed with Pam that Trish, Stephanie and Vic look forward to the virtual meeting with Pam on Friday, 9/6, in preparation for the student workshop on teaching/encouraging anti-bullying that CKN is jointly conducting at MTSU on September 24th.
- The Franklin Classic is well-aligned with CKN's objectives, target audience, and community partners. As volunteer staffing and scheduling continue to permit, this **race event should be an annual priority** among CKN/Moozie engagements. Ideally, CKN would have a second Moozie volunteer, to rotate mascot time. Also, we could consider Moozie's participation as a walker in the 1K race or a visible and helpful volunteer role.
- Moozie was prominently stationed **at the finish line** for the 10K to congratulate runners and **at the start** for the 1K where a large number of children participated. Many participants slid from the far side to be closer to Moozie and give her high fives or fist bumps as they departed on their moooving trek. Scott took photos and videos of Moozie interacting with race participants and of Moozie's first encounter with a surprised and puzzled Dalmatian. (As Vic pointed out, Moozie's attire was the lighter-weight spotted costume).

Financials – Income

Puppet sales (6@\$15.00)

Moozie Magic sales (1@\$5.00)

Moozie tee-shirt discounted for contest winner/ambassador family (1@\$10.00)

Other cash donations (\$10 from two donors)

Less 10% share donation for Mercy Healthcare (as planned/relayed by CKN and to be sent to Mercy)

Total Income = \$115.00 less \$11.50 shared with Mercy = \$103.50 net income

Note RE Expenses: CKN incurred no direct fee for event vendor participation. Most vendors were sponsors. CKN purchased four sets of four ten-pound weights considering City of Franklin's requirement for canopy anchors. Cost was \$160.51 which is essentially amortized over all similar Moozie exhibit events from 9/2/24 onward.