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## Up to the Challenge

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The field of 28 runners and walkers begin the Albany Valley Challenge 5K in New Albany on Saturday, Sept. 24. John Johnson (14) and Jestina Dawson (26) were the overall and female winners, respectively.

The course was slightly different, but the result was the same at the Albany Valley Challenge 5K run/walk in New Albany on Sept. 24. Ulster's John Johnson claimed the title for the fourth straight year with a time of 18:06.

Johnson, who won the Camptown Races the previous week, was unchallenged, easily outdistancing runner-up Joshua Sitas, who crossed in 21:52. Jestina Dawson, the 2008 women's champion, reclaimed the crown with an impressive third-place overall finish. The Deposit, NY, resident finished the race in 22:01.

Jean Mint was the second-place female, finishing 12th, overall, in 26:18. This year's course had been altered from previous years with the field starting on Fawcett Street near the borough park, rather than on Rt. 220. The new layout replaced a quarter mile of paved road with the same distance of trail between Overton Road and Pelton Hill Road in the middle of the course.

"It was a good course," Johnson said of the new layout. "(Race director) Ronnie Robinson changed it up this year with more trail, which I love. I like it better than it has been." Dawson, who missed last year's race because of a pregnancy, was also pleased with the change.

"Awesome!" Dawson said. "It was a little muddy but I like it that way. More woods, obviously more hill, a little more challenging than the last one. It was a lot of fun."

This year's field of 28 competitors was certainly diverse with 16 male and 12 female participants, ranging in age from eight to 67.

"I think the rainy weather (the previous evening) affected attendance somewhat," Robinson said.

The eight-year-old was Dawson's daughter, Madison.

"Madison has run it more than I have actually because she ran it last year," Dawson said with a chuckle.

Johnson was happy to see the number of competitors on the rise.

"It's good to see Ronnie's race growing," he said. "He does a good job with the race. It's good to see people coming out and supporting it."

While the Dawsons had the longest trip to compete, Steve and Gail Linn of Zion Grove in lower Columbia County ran the race for the first time.

"We knew about this race for several years and had it on our list of ones to do," said Steve Linn. "We'll come back and do it again."

The Linns are veteran runners with several marathons on their resumes and they enjoyed the race layout.

"I loved the course," he said.

Robinson was able to run in the event himself because he had capable helpers, including Towanda's Les Sheridan, who is race director for the Riverfest 5K.

"I'm thankful for Les and all who helped out," Robinson said.

The male age-group winners were: 15-18: Cody Auer; 19-29: Alden Curtis Park; 30-39: Johnson; 40-49: Mike Randall; 50-59: Mike Hudyncia, and 60-up: Robinson.

For the females, the age-group winners were: 11-under: Madison Dawson; 19-29: Sarah DeLong; 30-39: Jestina Dawson; 40-49: Marie Girven; 50-59: Gail Linn, and 60-up: Bonnie Larrabee.

Wanda Spencer was the top walker.

## **Results**

Results from the Albany Valley Challenge, a 5K run/walk, held in New Albany on Saturday, Sept. 24:

1. John Johnson, 18:06; 2. Joshua Sitas, 21:52; 3. Jestina Dawson, 22:01; 4. Chris Richlin, 22:13; 5. Mike Hudyncia, 22:36; 6. Mike Randall, 23:00; 7. Bill Mosier, 23:38; 8. Brad Delamater, 23:49; 9. Jim Donovan, 24:06; 10. Matt Voda, 24:26; 11. Alden Curtis Park, 24:49; 12. Jean Mint, 26:18; 13. Jim Hoffman, 27:21; 14. John Voda, 27:47; 15. Steven Linn, 31:33; 16. Ron Robinson, 31:34; 17. Gail Linn, 33:02; 18. William Trujillo, 33:14; 19. Teresa Trujillo, 33:23; 20. Sarah DeLong 34:21; 21. Marie Girven, 35:21; 22. Cody Auer, 37:52; 23. Debra McPherson, 41:02; 24. Jennifer Sitas, 41:10; 25. Bonnie Larrabee, 43:40; 26. Madison Dawson, 44:13; 27. Janice Bennett, 50:07; 28. Wanda Spencer, 57:15.



Jestina Dawson, left, and John Johnson pose with the trophies they won as female and overall winner, respectively, in the Albany Valley Challenge 5K in New Albany on Sept. 24. Dawson, from Deposit, NY, is a two-time female champion in the event, while Johnson, an Ulster resident, claimed his fourth straight overall title.

- [Pete Hardenstine](#)