

# The Colleen Ritzer 5K

- Jacob Keller

I woke up at 6:15 on a Sunday morning and didn't go back to bed. I showered, got dressed, ate, and then headed to the high school. I then spent 50 minutes on a van ride to Andover. Why would I ever want to wake up early, go to MHS, and go on a ratchety van ride on a Sunday? Because I and eleven other members of the Jefferson Forum club, including teachers, wanted to volunteer at the Colleen Ritzer 5K.

The Colleen Ritzer 5K commemorates Colleen Ritzer, a beloved high school math teacher from Danvers, who was killed about two and a half years ago. Money raised from registration goes to the Colleen E. Ritzer Memorial Scholarship Fund, which benefits graduating high school seniors who demonstrate a passion for teaching, academic excellence, and care for family. The race was in Andover, where Colleen grew up.

I've never attended this race before and I didn't know who Colleen Ritzer was at the time. All I knew was that it sounded interesting. So we got our Bagel World bagels (a must have) and headed out. There were a few problems with the van: it smelled; we didn't really know how to get the side door open; and the thing was massive: it took seemingly forever to get it to stop -- unless you count the time where we came to a quick stop and a coffee cup exploded over the floor. Although, I must say, the driver did a masterful job at parking.

We walked to the registration building to sign in and get our volunteer shirts. Then, the group split up into pairs and headed to various stations along the course about 20 minutes before the race started. We sat and waited at the station with another pair of students who lived in Andover. I thought we'd see our first runner 18 minutes into the race because our station was about 2.5 miles from the starting point. Apparently there were some diehard racers, so we saw our first person only about 12 minutes after the start. After the diehards were the fast joggers, then the joggers who were panting loudly, then speed walkers, regular walkers, and people who seemingly got to the race late. There were thousands of people. My station ran out of water, lemonade, and every sort of cup we had by the time the walkers came to us. Other stations that cheered racers on complained about aching hands and worn-out throats.

I don't know the exact count, but the highest number I saw was on a racer's sticker that read 3672. It definitely was a family event. There were lots of babies in strollers and 5 year olds running around the course being chased by their mothers. It was an impressive event. I'd have to say, I don't regret being there for my Sunday morning: I'm glad I went and I recommend going. There's always the opportunity to volunteer next year... or even race!