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NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

The 19th annual RiverWalk 6k Run & Walk this weekend – *featuring guest celebrity Dan Roche of WBZ-TV and the Re/Max hot air balloon* - raised nearly \$39,000 for Elder Services of the Merrimack Valley.

The RiverWalk race is the agency's largest annual fundraiser, and proceeds are used by the non-profit group to help elders throughout the Merrimack Valley from Lowell to Newburyport. Funds were raised through donations, raffles and sponsorships – including the Title Sponsor SAK Paintball World, Gold Sponsors Commonwealth Care Alliance, Enterprise Bank, Evercare Senior Center, Greater Lawrence Family Health, Pentucket Medical Associates and Trinity EMS, which also provided ambulance and first aid facilities for the race.

The 2008 RiverWalk event, which began at 10:00am Sunday in front of the Elder Services offices in the RiverWalk complex, progressed along the banks of the scenic Merrimack River and through Pemberton State Park, with historic stops at Lawrence Heritage State Park.

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RiverWalk – 2.

Robert Hunter, 85 of Tewksbury, MA - the oldest runner in the field for both 2007 and 2008 - ran the 6K distance in 1:01:13. "I've been running for 65 years and this is one of the best courses I've even run," said Hunter.

"Not only was the route beautiful but the whole event was fun," remarked Hunter. "I'll be back next year with a bunch of my friends."

Joseph Gurczak of Newburyport completed the race in 21:40 and Patti Finocchiaro of Methuen ran in 30:31, earning the fastest times for male and female overall categories.

The Team Spirit award for the most exuberant Walking Team was presented to John Spellman of Visiting Angels of Newburyport.

Both before and after the race, festivities in the parking lot at Elder Services provided wholesome family fun and entertainment. Along with free food and beverages, the Re/Max hot air balloon provided tethered rides (for a \$5 donation). There was also music, games, prizes, and a wide range of entertainment including face painting, the Lowell Spinners' Canalagator and the Lowell Devil Dogs' Devil Dog, bobbing for apples, massages, and displays by the National Guard.

The money raised by the RiverWalk is used primarily for emergency assistance to aid the elderly. Each year the Elder Care Fund helps over 4,000 elders with basic items such as prescriptions, eyeglasses, dentures, fuel, food, walkers and wheelchairs.

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Elder Services of the Merrimack Valley, Inc., is a private non-profit agency supported by state and federal contracts, foundations, corporations, and private donations that help provide choices for older adults, allowing them to remain safe at home. For additional information, please contact Tony Palmisano, Director of Development & Communications, at 978.946.1350 or tpalmisano@esmv.org.