

FROM BEACH TO BAY TO FAMILIES IN NEED

CORPUS CHRISTI — Every-year the Beach to Bay Relay Marathon donates tens of thousands of dollars to the community. A track scholarship to Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, Special Olympics, Boy Scout troops, church groups, high school athletic teams and the Corpus Christi police department all benefit annually from the \$60,000 or so the race brings in.

The record haul this year allowed race director Doug McBee to donate to a different cause -- two local families who recently lost 3-year-old sons in separate tragedies. "I was just watching the local coverage, and I just thought to myself why wouldn't we help? That's what we do," McBee said. "Beach to Bay was really successful this year. We're going to make a lot of donations we normally do with a lot leftover."

Eli Rodriguez died May 24 after being hit by a truck in the parking lot of Chuck E. Cheese's, where he was headed to a birthday party for a child of one of his mom's nursing school classmates. Only one day earlier, Isaac David De Leon was killed in an early morning fire in the 900 block of Lexington Avenue. Isaac's father received second- and third-degree burns to his hands and face while trying to rescue him. The house had been engulfed in flames.

The two tragedies brought an outpouring of support from the community. Lines snaked out the door at a barbecue fundraiser for Eli. Isaac's family received help from the American Red Cross and donations to Funeraria del Angel. After getting the idea to help, McBee called other board members for the Corpus Christi Roadrunners, which organizes Beach to Bay. They agreed wholeheartedly. "I didn't know them," McBee said. "We just wanted to help."

The Roadrunners paid the balance of Isaac's funeral, about \$1,800, and gave \$1,500 to his family. Others already had paid \$3,000 for the funeral. The group also gave \$2,000 to Eli's family. McBee said Roadrunner members were proud to have donated, even though the families weren't members and the donations weren't the norm.

"Thanks," one member wrote on the group's Facebook page. "My heart broke for both those children and their families. Its good to know I'm a part of this organization." McBee said he hasn't heard from the families, but the group wasn't out for recognition. "I didn't leave my name or anything," McBee said. "They probably don't even know how to reach me."