

Local runners, walkers gather to finish Fletcher's run

By Chris Siers
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LEWISBURG — Something as simple as an early morning jog is supposed to be a safe outlet for anyone.

That tragically wasn't the case for Memphis mother and teacher Eliza Fletcher.

Fletcher was abducted and murdered during an early morning run on September 2.

Her murder sent shockwaves throughout the nation and the response created a voice that would not be silenced.

Across the nation, women gathered at 4 a.m. on Friday to finish Fletcher's run and locally, 75 runners and walkers joined in the early morning hours to finish her run.

The 4 a.m. meeting time symbolized the time Fletcher left for her final run on that fateful morning.

The local runners gathered at Functional Fitness and the baseball/softball association lit up the morning sky with the field lights.

Runners had three distances to choose from, ranging from one to three miles.

Leading the way, the Marshall County High School cross country team set the pace for the run.

Those who honored Fletcher in the run joined their voices in unison for those women who enjoy even the simplest of sports like running will not be overshadowed by those who would do them harm.

"After putting out the initial invite, it quickly became evident that a chord was struck, especially among the women of our community, and more parking would be needed than Functional Fitness could provide," Jennifer Wenneker said.

Wenneker helped organize the event and promoted the outreach to get runners to join for the run.

"It was heart-warming to see our young



Runners gather to honor the life of Liza Fletcher, whose life was taken during a pre-dawn run on September 2.

Submitted photos



Tiffany Tubville (left) and her friend Jane Burnett both took part in the run to honor Liza Fletcher.



Members of the Marshall County cross country team led the way during the run on Friday morning. Those who participated are (from left) Aydan Cook, Jacob Wakham, Terrence Bishop, Kamaria Johnson, Aliyah Wenneker, Kendall Adams, Kamea Johnson, Karlie Lohr, Maggie Steely, Abigail Haley, and Olympia Cathey.

people leading the way. In my mind, that was very symbolic. They will be instruments of societal change that we desperately want and need to see," Wenneker added.

Runners from across the nation hosted similar runs in solidarity that stand as a stern opposition to violence against women.

Amber Wright was another participant who joined in finishing Fletcher's run and she said the emotions of joining other local women in the run were overwhelming.

"I wasn't expecting to be so full of emotion while getting ready that morning. To know it was her last time doing some

of the things we don't even think about like tying our shoes, brushing our hair and teeth, when we arrived to the ball field that morning," Wright said.

"To see so many of our friends there was just, wow. Jennifer's speech said it all. We should never have to take exercise away from our daily routines just because we have to protect ourselves. It was simply overwhelming, yet a blessing to be able to do that run."

Many runners felt a connection to Fletcher, being a runner, mother and even a teacher.

"Eliza being kidnapped while running hit close to home for the running community. We

can all relate to trying to get our run in whenever it's possible in our day, and as a similar aged wife & mother of two young kids myself my heart breaks for her family that she couldn't come back home to because of this evil act committed," Tiffany Tubville said.

The local turnout in the gathering on Friday morning symbolized so much more than just a memorial run, but a voice of opposition to violence against women.

"It was touching to see the support from our local Marshall County community that early in the morning at 4:20 a.m., Friday September 9th, knowing that many other communities around Tennessee were also meeting to honor Eliza Fletcher's life, the

passion she had for running, and to grieve her tragic death by an awful crime," Tubville said.

Safety in running is always a concern for women runners, but from the turnout of those on Friday, members of the walk, run and cycle community have been impacted Fletcher's death.

Her story has impacted many runners she never even met by drawing the community closer together and putting a spotlight on runner safety.

"I spoke to two ladies afterwards about races we've done, and it's amazing how the shared interest can bond us together. I hope that our running, walking and cycling community continues to grow because not only is it wonderful

way to stay active, but it's also a great way to make friends that look out for each other," Tubville added.

Marshall County High School cross country runner Kamea Johnson agreed when asked why she wanted to run in the early morning hours on Friday.

"We wanted to finish Eliza's run and to show that people care of all ages," Johnson said.

If Fletcher's story has told society anything, it's the fact the running community will not stand for such injustices and has brought together an even closer solidarity.

While Fletcher was unable to finish her run, the local community banded together to finish it for her.



Tribune Photos by Chris Siers

Thomas Beech dives on an onside-kick by Tullahoma and recovers possession for the Tigers on the 40-yard line.



Aja Jones makes an acrobatic catch on an 18-yard pass by quarterback Silas Teat to set up a Marshall County touchdown in the third quarter.



Brock Anderson scoops the ball on a Tullahoma fumble and scores from four yards out after a sack by Trey Warner.

Tigers blow out defending state champs

By Chris Siers
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LEWISBURG — Beating the defending state champion is impressive enough on its own.

Going on a 42-0 run to reach a running clock by the end of the third quarter is a statement win.

That's just what happened for the Marshall County Tigers (4-0, 2-0) on Friday night in their 42-7 thumping of defending Class AAAA state champion Tullahoma.

"We're just so proud of our kids. They're not the same team they were last year, but we're thrilled our kids won

a big game in convincing fashion against a really good program," Marshall County coach Thomas Osteen said.

Friday's game got off to an odd start for the Tigers, with the Marshall County offense not seeing the field for over 10 minutes of game time, thanks to a pair of lengthy Wildcat drives and some special teams magic courtesy of Tiger sophomore Aja Jones.

Tullahoma (1-2, 0-1) took the game's opening drive 80 yards over nearly five minutes to the end zone to strike first on a Nathan DeLaughter four-yard strike.

On the following kickoff, Jones took the kick

return 96 yards to the house, evening the score after Wyatt Joyce's successful kick after.

The Wildcats' second drive began on their own 20-yard line again, but it was a fake punt on fourth down that allowed Tullahoma to move the chains.

The drive eventually stalled and allowed the Tiger offense to finally get on the field.

Marshall County's first possession, however, went nowhere and after a false start on fourth down backed the Tigers up, Osteen opted to punt.

Tullahoma muffed the reception and the Tigers took over on the Wildcat four-yard line, which set

up the go-ahead score which came on a four yard toss by Teat to Jayden Randolph.

Marshall County did not trail again.

"Our defense, after that first drive, really played well, put pressure on their quarterback and made every yard tough for them. Then offensively, we got going a little bit in the third quarter," Osteen said.

Neither team was particularly effective in the second quarter, but it was the Marshall County defense that didn't allow the Wildcats to move the chains once in the frame.

That 14-7 score held through the remain-

der of the half, but in the third quarter, everything flipped on a dime for the Tigers and the earlier miscues and penalties were cleaned up.

Kicking off a 28-point third quarter, the Tigers' opening drive of the second half went 75 yards and was capped by a quarterback sneak into the end zone by Teat, bumping the Marshall County lead to 21-7 after Joyce's successful kick.

Forcing a punt on the following Wildcat drive, Marshall County needed just five plays before senior tailback Demari

Braden sliced into the end zone, coming just 3:21 after Teat's sneak.

With Braden's score making it a 28-7 lead for the home team, it was the Marshall County defense that answered the bell as the game continued to stretch into the third quarter.

The Tigers' defensive front continued to wear down the Wildcat offensive line, allowing Marshall County to pressure DeLaughter in the backfield.

On the Tullahoma 28-yard line, it was the tandem of linebacker Trey Warner and defen-

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