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The festival has been growing every year, organizer Brian Stanley said.

## Race for charity

### 1,100 athletes run for a good cause

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Andrea Lypka / MyFoxTampaBay.com

Eleven hundred athletes ran for fun -- and a good cause -- at the Fourth Annual Morton Plant Mease Triathlon on Sunday at Sand Key Park.

They started the triathlon with a one-third-mile open-water swim, then a 13-mile bike route through Clearwater and Belleair, and completed the race with a 3.1-mile run through the park.

#### Photo Gallery: The Morton Mease Plant Triathlon

Pam Haver came to the event for the first time. She says she liked the pace of the triathlon.

"It's not too much and not too little," she said. "I have done other triathlons but this is the first year for me at this one. I never go for time, I just hope to finish this one. Plus, my doctor says I shouldn't be doing this anymore. "

Some athletes say the race motivates them to train, stay in shape and win. One of them was the first at the finish line, Spencer Smith from Palm Harbor. The 36-year-old finished the race under one hour, with a race time of 56:10.

Smith is a three-time World Triathlon champion and two-time Ironman champion. His motto is "never stop trying."

"This is my fourth attempt," he said. "This year, it was nice to win this one. It took me longer to win this one than the World Triathlon Championship. Triathlons are my passion."

The top female finisher in the Female Elite group was Nina Craft, 41, from Clermont. She was also the 2009 Gasparilla Marathon and 2007 Ironman Brazil winner, and the 2007 Florida Ironman record-breaker.

The top five Elite and Open Division finishers received a \$4,000 prize.

The oldest couple to compete and win in their age category was Ray Yost and Jackie Yost of Treasure Island. The Yosts have been to 100 triathlons so far, they say.

"I am the best 80-year-old out here," said Ray.

"We like to compete; it's fun," added his wife, Jackie Yost.

The event was a fundraiser to purchase an infant simulator for training purposes, said Brian Stanley, co-chair of Morton Plant Mease Foundation's Skip Cline Young Leadership Society. He has been racing for a good cause for six years in the St. Anthony's Race and for three years at the Morton Plant Mease Triathlon. Stanley was also the winner of the Skip Cline division this year.

"This is a capital improvement that the medical staff can use for training purposes to deal with infant health issues," he said.

The festival has been growing every year, Stanley said.

"This year we are the largest race in Florida for sprint races," he said. "There must be a couple of thousand people out there today. As we grow, we will also grow our price purse, which will be more attractive to pro athletes."

Next year's race will be held once June 27 in Sand Key Park.

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