

Fourth Moralez Mini Olympics charges on



Adriyel Earl, 3, finishes first in his 100 meter dash of the tiny tots division at the 2017 Annual Nikolas Moralez Mini Olympics on June 24, 2017, at Ratliff Stadium.

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Stella Neboh finds herself beaming, now, every summer, during every June, every time she sees those youngsters hustle their way down the track.

Yes. It'll never get old.

The fourth annual Nikolas Moralez Mini Olympics track and field meet opened Thursday and continues today and Saturday at Ratliff Stadium, providing summer fun in the sun for participants from age 2-6 in the Tiny Tots division, to those sharpening their skills on the track and in the jumping sands in the Masters division.

Tonight, the event celebrates kicking off in earnest with its Opening Ceremony at 7 p.m., to be followed with smiles and laughter around the Tiny Tots' 100-meter race.

"It's exciting," Neboh said over the phone this week, looking ahead to the event.

"Every year, my pride and joy are the little Tiny Tots. ... Those little Tiny Tots, they enjoy it every day and they've been practicing so hard for months now. So it's time to show up."

Registration was done in advance for most divisions, but youngsters in the Tiny Tots age range are welcome to register at the gate before the event tonight.

The event marks the third running of the annual event, which honors Moralez, an Odessa boy who died in a car accident in May 2012 at the age of 14.

Neboh, a meet coordinator with the USATF West Texas Association, helped put together the event at the suggestion of her son, Dexter Neboh, who was one of Moralez's best friends in life.

Last year, during the third running, organizers awarded a scholarship named in Moralez's honor to one of its older, teenage competitors, GJ Nelson, who ran track for and graduated from Permian.

Saturday, Neboh said the meet will award a scholarship named in the honor of Hunter Miller, a Permian student who died in a car wreck at age 16 in October of 2014.

During the first running, Dexter Neboh said the event marked a fitting way to honor Moralez, who was involved in athletics just like him. Dexter said the meet is much like something he and Moralez would've enjoyed participating in when they were kids. Dexter won state gold with Permian in the triple jump and now competes for the University of Oklahoma's track and field team.

This year, the vision for the Moralez meet charges on, offering Odessa kids a chance to get out and participate in athletics — even those in the Tiny Tots age who are too young for team sports.

"This gives them something to do all summer — and then winning the medals is even more rewarding for them," Stella Neboh said. "They love it."