

## A race against melting snow

**BY RICK NATHANSON**

JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

The 18th annual Sandia Snowshoe Race drew 105 participants to Sandia Crest on Jan. 22. Because of melting snow on some of the roads and trails, the start/finish line had to be moved, shortening what would have been a 5K race — roughly 3.1 miles — to 2.9 miles. The event was sponsored by the Friends of the Sandia Mountains. Proceeds from the \$25 race fees go toward preservation and maintenance of trails and other U.S. Forest Service resources in the Cibola National Forest.

The racers, who ranged in age from 13 to 78, braved temperatures that stayed in the 20s as they made their way along a course that climbed from 10,315 feet in elevation to 10,594 feet.

At the end of the race, the top three finishers were Karl Walczak, 41, of Albuquerque, in first place; Brian Hutsel, 37, of Sandia Park, in second place; and Anthony Fleg, 43, of Albuquerque, in third place.



RIGHT: David J. Johnson puts on his snowshoes prior to the start of the Sandia Snowshoe Race. BELOW: Racers compete to finish first. Proceeds from entry fees go toward maintenance of trails.



Women's division winner Rissa Lane of Cedar Crest heads toward the finish line. It was Lane's first time running the event. Lane and other participants began at an elevation of 10,315 feet.



A group of racers gather their equipment before the start of the race, which began on a lower parking lot near the trails. The event was put on by Friends of the Sandia Mountains.



Racers decked out in snowshoes and winter gear hold poles while traversing the snowy trail. Participants in the race spanned the ages of 13 to 78.





Karl Walczak of Albuquerque approaches the final stretch of the course. Walczak finished first out of about a 100 participants competing in the planned 5K on the Sandia Crest Saturday morning. ROBERTO E. ROSALES/JOURNAL



Luis Fowler rubs the chin of his recently adopted dog, Chico, after the race's end. Fowler and his girlfriend, Molly Arevalo, recently moved to Albuquerque from Los Angeles.



The 18th Annual Sandia Snowshoe Race went forward Saturday morning despite melting snow on some of the roads and trails that shortened what would have been a 3.1-mile course to 2.9 miles. Participants endured 16-degree weather in the early morning hours. Temperatures remained in the 20s throughout the event.