

RACING WITH A TRUE PURPOSE

By DON SIKORSKI
Special to the Bulletin

If you have the opportunity to do something worthwhile for yourself while at the same time accomplishing something beneficial to others, that opportunity should certainly be worth consideration. So when conversations of running a half marathon and working on fundraising opportunities for our youngest son Kyle's medical group crossed paths, the resulting decision in how to accomplish both made perfect sense. On Sunday, October 12th, my wife Catherine will be running in the B.A.A. Half Marathon in Boston with a two-fold purpose; to challenge herself in racing a distance well outside of her 5K to 5 mile comfort zone, and to raise money for the Yale Hemophilia Center.

Running a race for charity is an opportunity to take an activity (running) that can be sometimes considered selfish and turn it into an opportunity to do something for others. In October 2004, our youngest son Kyle was diagnosed with Severe Hemophilia A, a rare genetic blood clotting disorder. He was just six months old at the time. Kyle began receiving treatment for this disease at the Yale University Children's Hospital under the direction of Dr. Diana Beardsley and her staff. The quality of care that Yale New Haven Hospital, Dr. Beardsley, and her team has provided to Kyle and other children with similar conditions has been instrumental in allowing Kyle to live a normal life with hemophilia.

Initially, the reality of learning about Kyle's condition was very difficult to accept. During this time, we have been trying to decide what we can do to give back to the Yale Hemophilia Center at Yale University School of Medicine. Since running has been a significant part of our lives for many years, we felt that the opportunity to compete in one of the premiere road race events in New England, combined with fundraising efforts for a very worthwhile cause, would be the best way to raise both awareness and funds for the Yale Hemophilia Center. I have been recruited to play the dual role of husband and coach (not to mention sports psychologist). Catherine will handle the running part. She has been a runner since the age of 13 and from high school cross-country and track through college and road racing, running has been a constant in her life, away from the activity only for pregnancies and injuries. Still, it was a dozen years and two children ago when Catherine last ran a race of this distance. The challenge of balancing numerous family commitments with consistent training required to complete a half marathon, not to mention the task of staying injury free, will serve as a motivator. And the opportunity to raise money for Kyle's Hemophilia Treatment Center is a personal goal.

For those unfamiliar with Hemophilia A, the condition is also known as Factor VIII deficiency or classic Hemophilia. It is largely an inherited disorder in which one of the proteins needed to form blood clots is missing or reduced. In about 30% of all cases, there is no family history or the disorder and condition is the result of a spontaneous gene mutation. Approximately 1 in 5,000 males born in the United States will have hemophilia. An individual with hemophilia will bleed for a longer duration than normal. Although small cuts or surface bruises are usually not problematic, a more traumatic injury may result in serious medical problems and potential disability affecting the joints and muscles. In order to treat these bleeding episodes, the missing clotting factor must be replaced in order to form a clot to stop the bleeding. In cases of severe hemophilia, physicians have recommended administering a regimen of regular factor replacement treatments, such as prophylaxis, in an effort to prevent bleeding episodes before they happen.

Funds raised to benefit the treatment center at Yale New-Haven Hospital can be used towards educational workshops, peer support groups, scholarships, and may provide assistance for hemophilia patients to attend summer camps. The goal is to promote opportunities for improving the quality of life for persons with Hemophilia and to raise a total of \$5,000 or more for the cause. "After years of running on teams and running for myself, I am proud of the fact that I am now running for someone else," said Catherine.

On Sunday, October 12th, 2008, Catherine has committed to run 13.1 rolling miles on the streets of Boston, through Franklin Park, and finishing back at the neighborhood of Fenway Park at Roberto Clemente Field. The timing of the race is also significant. It was almost exactly four years to the day earlier that we spent several days and nights at Yale New Haven Hospital, first learning of Kyle's condition (also the same time that the Red Sox came back from being down 3-0 to sweep the Yankees in the A.L.C.S. and move on to win their first World Series in 86 years, forever assuring that Kyle will grow up a Sox fan). The medical education we have received since that time has been significant. You also gain an appreciation for your own good fortunes and learn to rise above the lesser of life's problems. "When Kyle has a bad day or has to deal with having a needle stuck in him, I begin to realize how minimal my own complaints of aches and pains are in comparison, says Catherine. "Kyle is brave and has been through more (medically) in his first four years than most people have in a lifetime. He is my rock".

Kyle and others like him will live with Hemophilia for a lifetime; Catherine anticipates experiencing pain and suffering for less than two hours. The sacrifice is insignificant compared to the challenges that Kyle has tackled in the last four years. Please consider a contribution to Kyle's Treatment Center in hopes that other children like him can continue to live and act like other healthy little boys. Donations can be mailed to 33 Greenwich Court, Norwich, CT 06360 with checks made payable to "Yale Hemophilia Center". Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. Thank you in advance for your generosity and support of Yale Hemophilia Center.

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