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Making Great Strides

Now in its ninth year, the Maryland Half Marathon & 5K raises money for cancer research.

By Adam Stone

For area runners and fitness enthusiasts, it's one of the highlights of the year.

The ninth annual Maryland Half Marathon & 5K, to benefit the University of Maryland Marlene and Stewart Greenebaum Comprehensive Cancer Center, will be held on Saturday, May 13, in the Maple Lawn community of Howard County. *Jmore* recently spoke with Michael Greenebaum, a Baltimore-based real estate developer and Temple Oheb Shalom congregant. He talked about the run, which honors his mother and father, as well as the current state of cancer research and treatment in the region.

What's this run about?

Our slogan is, "Run with a purpose." Over nine years, we have raised more than \$3 million for the cancer center, with proceeds going directly for cancer research, clinical trials and ground-breaking drug trials.

How did it all get started?

I have been running since I got out of college. Co-founder [and co-chair] Jon Sevel and I were running together in other races, and we realized we could put on our own half marathon and do something to help other people. We were up in Baltimore County for our first couple of years and we decided to move it to Howard County. This year, it is in Maple Lawn, running through the surrounding communities, as well as a 5K and a kids' fun run. We've tried to make it a very family-oriented event.

How's the turnout been?

We average about 1,700 to 2,000 runners each year, but what's even more important is that we encourage the runners to fundraise. So our sponsors underwrite the event and the participants raise additional funds. That is what has been the driver of our success. Our main sponsor is St. John Properties. Berkeley Research Group is our 5K sponsor and Columbia Academy sponsors our kids' fun run.

How is your family connected to the cause?

My mom is a 26-year breast cancer survivor. Five years into her journey with cancer, my dad made a major gift to the university cancer center, which was really the catalyst for redeveloping the cancer center and attracting world-class researchers.

Now, the center is ranked in the top 25 cancer centers in the country and it also has obtained the highest designation from the National Cancer Institute, the "Comprehensive Cancer Designation." That means they excel not just in clinical care but in research. There are over 9,000 cancer centers in the country, so to reach the top 25 really puts them in the upper echelons.

Is cancer research making headway?

I think so. My sense is that we are doing really well. Many types of cancer that used to be a death sentence now are treated as a chronic disease.

When my mom's cancer was first diagnosed, it was not a good prognosis. Today for breast cancer, it has become much more treatable. You read a lot about early detection with colon cancer and other types of cancer, and there are a lot of really good treatments available. There have been tremendous strides.

How does the local area stack up in fighting cancer?

We are blessed in Maryland to have tremendous researchers at the Greenebaum Center and in a lot of other places. Maryland and Washington are some of the best places in the nation for medical care. We have great institutions; we have great health systems. I cannot think of very many treatments that we don't have access to here.

If you are in Baltimore and you need health care, you have world-class options available. I think of it as the best kind of competition: The general public really benefits from the way these institutions are striving for results and striving for patient outcomes.

Is this a personal matter for you?

It is. My mother's experience helped us all to realize how important it is to have support through a journey like this, to have people who really care. So now I help people all the time who know about my involvement with the Greenebaum Center. When people need to make appointments or find a doctor they call me, because they know that I am somewhat on the front lines. That gives me the chance to offer my help and guidance.

And then there are so many people who come to me and thank me for putting on this event — just because it gives them an opportunity to give back to the community. **JM**

For information, visit mdhalfmarathon.com.

Adam Stone is an Annapolis-based freelance writer.

(Facing page) Top, Runners in last year's 5k line-up for the race. (Bottom), Michael Greenebaum shares thoughts about the race's benefits with the media.

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