



CURE

Runners race for cure at Marine Corps Marathon

By Cpl. J. Agg

Combat Correspondent

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While some of the 16,987 participants in the 29th Annual Marine Corps Marathon were competing for the prestige of winning "The People's Marathon", and most were driven by a desire to test themselves mentally and physically, a handful were motivated by what they feel is a more noble cause -- the race to cure multiple sclerosis.

Destination Cure, with seven runners in the marathon, raised more than \$300,000 for Destination Cure in the month leading up to the race. This nationally recognized 501(c)(3) non-profit organization facilitates fundraising for research to find a cure for multiple sclerosis, a debilitating neurological disease affecting nearly one million Americans today.

Maj. Joseph M. Fagan, a plans-mobilization officer stationed here, said he felt a need to support a charitable organization following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and was attracted to Destination Cure by the integrity of the program. "Destination Cure is a great cause," said Fagan. "Sometimes charities go to something different, to pay salaries and so forth, but with Destination Cure you know 100 percent of the money goes to the cause."

Because Destination Cure commits all donations directly to promising research programs to cure MS, it relies heavily on the dedication of volunteers such as Fagan and others to spread the word about the cause.

“I talk to anybody about it,” said Fagan. “I send out e-mails. I send out letters. I put up flyers. When people stop me to talk about running, I talk about it. The more people who find out about (Destination Cure), the closer we are to finding a cure.”

Fagan, who also plans to run the New York City Marathon Sunday and the 42nd Annual JFK 50 Mile Nov. 20 to benefit Destination Cure, said thinking about his sponsors’ generous donations helped to motivate him throughout Sunday’s race.

“There are so many times [during the race] you are thinking about who you are running for. It makes it so much easier,” said Fagan. “A person with MS would kill to be doing something like this.”

Destination Cure’s unique ability to donate 100 percent of all proceeds to the cause while operating with no overhead attracts dedicated volunteers such as Krista Milne of Boston.

“As a person with MS, what (Destination Cure) is doing really keeps me going on days when I’m not feeling well and gives me hope that a cure will be found soon,” said Milne.

Milne said that the most prominent beneficiary of Destination Cure is currently the Yale University School of Medicine Department of Neurology, chaired by Dr. Stephen G. Waxman, M.D., Ph.D., although other programs committed to promising MS research are also being considered as future donation recipients.

While Destination Cure does accept corporate donations and sponsorships, the true spirit of the organization can be seen in its ability to give anyone, anywhere, the tools necessary to turn any event. from a foot race to a bake sale, into a fundraiser for MS research and to contribute all of the money raised at these events to MS research. (Cpl. Agg, this addition regarding all of the money being contributed is a key part of the true spirit as well.)

Destination Cure President and Founder John D. Guandolo, said his organization focuses on enabling the fundraising efforts of private individuals.

“We make it really easy for people to get involved,” said Guandolo. “We provide guidance for them in their fundraising efforts. We empower people to do something tremendous.”

Guandolo, a former Marine Corps officer, said he was proud to associate his organization with the Marine Corps Marathon for the first time this year.

“The marathon itself exemplifies what our organization is about,” said Guandolo. “Destination Cure is based on integrity and character, donating every penny to the cause. There are no other organizations that do what we do. It didn’t take much for the folks at the Marine Corps Marathon to believe in us. It was a perfect match.”

Guandolo said he was inspired to found Destination Cure in 1998 by the strength and character of his mother, Evelyn Wirth Guandolo, whose defining characteristic was her indomitable spirit despite her 30-year struggle with MS.

“I was 2 years old when my mother started feeling the effects of MS,” said Guandolo. “Growing up with my mother in a wheelchair, then bedridden and in a nursing home for years -- but still having a positive outlook -- has given my brother and (me) an amazing perspective on life.

“When we had her funeral, it was not people sitting around mourning. It was people who stood up and were motivated by her. They told the story of one person who made a difference in the lives of the people around her. Destination Cure was born of her spirit. It has created a unique, powerful entity, a true non-profit in every aspect.”

For more information about becoming a Destination Cure donor or sponsor, visit

www.destinationcure.com, call (571) 276-4820 or write P.O. Box 16055, Alexandria, Va., 22302.

Donations may also be made through the Combined Federal Campaign, which lists Destination Cure as organization number 7896.