

Teenager Josh Berns founded Mother's Day 'Race' for breast cancer research



Participants of "The Race" run through the streets of Legacy Village to raise monies and awareness for breast cancer research. (Photograph courtesy of Cleveland Clinic)

By LISA FREDRICKSON

Hunting Valley resident Josh Berns was just 12 years old when he came up with the idea to involve young people in the fight against breast cancer by organizing a one-mile walk/run. "The Race" in its first year was initially designed just for children. Maybe it's the energy of youth or maybe it's the bond of mother and son, but over

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time, this little effort has grown leaps and bounds in numbers of participants, monies raised and level of passion that fuels Josh's drive to continue this journey.

Josh organized the first walk/run event in 2004 as a way to support friends and family members who were battling breast cancer. According to Josh, a one-mile walk was decided upon so that everyone could participate. "The kids wanted something that everyone could do and accomplish easily," he said.

After a successful first event and as he was preparing for the second annual race, Josh's own mother, Patti Berns, was diagnosed with breast cancer. "That took the race to a whole new level," Josh said, "as it made the event much more personal." Patti underwent surgery

just three weeks before the second year's race and was able to participate in the walk and the festivities, Josh said.

The event has evolved over the years and now includes families and a competitive race along with the one-mile walk. The event is held each year on Mother's Day with 100 percent of the monies raised going to the Cleveland Clinic Taussig Cancer Center. The race is the Taussig Center's second largest fundraiser, and to date more than \$400,000 has been donated to the center for breast cancer research. Last year there were almost 400 participants. Josh's goals are to register 1,000 runners and walkers for this year's event and raise \$1 million by the time he graduates from Hawken High School next spring.

This year's event will be held on Sunday, May 10 at Legacy Village. The registration fee is \$20 a person and begins at 8 a.m. The walk will start at 9 a.m. with the race to follow at 9:30 a.m. "It's a fun way to raise money," Josh said. The event includes face painting, clowns, raffle prizes and a station to make Mother's Day cards. Participants will receive a t-shirt, and refreshments will be provided. Prizes will be awarded to the individual who raises the most money

and to the school or team with the greatest participation. "It's a high energy event that keeps everyone's attention," Josh said, "but short enough that they can participate then be done in time to have Mother's Day brunch with their families."

In addition to raising money, Josh hopes "The Race" will raise awareness about the disease. "If just one mom, sister or grandmother has a mammogram and even one life is spared, then we have accomplished our goal," he said. "The Race is on Mother's Day for a reason," Josh said. "We hope that kids can make sure their moms are following up and seeing their doctor annually," he continued.

Josh is one kid that is making a difference. Throughout his fundraising and publicizing efforts, he has received much support from friends, family, community and school members as well as the corporate world. Josh has harnessed the energy and optimism of youth to coordinate a highly successful family event that raises funds and awareness about breast cancer. Through his example, he is also teaching children that they can make a difference.

For more information on The Race, how to register and how to donate, please visit dotherace.com.