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Brian K. Carroll, holding his son, Brendan, will run in tomorrow's Boston Marathon in a fund-raising effort.

Charities can bank on race

Runners devote marathon effort

By Steven H. Foskett Jr.
TELEGRAM & GAZETTE

WORCESTER – When Brian K. Carroll looks at his 2 1/2-year-old son, Brendan, and sees a smiling child, he also remembers Brendan's rocky start in this world.

Born prematurely, Brendan weighed less than 2 pounds and was on life support for six weeks in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at UMass Memorial Medical Center-Memorial Campus.

“He suffered numerous complications. He was very sick,” Mr. Carroll said. “After about five months he was discharged, and he's a fun bouncy child today.”

Mr. Carroll was so satisfied with the level of care Brendan received that he decided to support UMass. He will run the Boston Marathon tomorrow to raise money to buy two new high-tech ventilators for the NICU at UMass.

Mr. Carroll is part of a large group of Central Massachusetts runners who are using the worldwide recognition of the Boston Marathon as a local fund-raising tool. Others include Phil DiSalvo, Jaime A. Flores and Charles Desourdy, all for different charities.

For Mr. Carroll, like most of the others, the reason is personal.

“The doctors became part of our family with our stay there. It’s payback for a debt that can’t be paid back,” he said of his fund-raising efforts. “They took such good care of such a sick little child, we wanted to give something back.”

Mr. Carroll, 39, who is president of the Small Business Service Bureau, hopes to raise \$50,000, which would pay for the two ventilators. As of Monday, he had about \$25,000 in pledges. He said many businesses and individuals have helped, including Tufts Health Plan, Blue Cross and Blue Shield, Charter Communications and Travelers Life & Annuity.

Calling himself a former runner who has fallen from grace, Mr. Carroll, a graduate of St. John’s High School in Shrewsbury, is running with two business associates, Dwight Porter and Dave Duncan. They are registered for the marathon under the name Brendan’s Buddies.

Mr. Carroll said he has been running 60 miles a week in preparation for the grueling 26-mile test from Hopkinton to Boston.

He said he thinks the Boston Marathon is a great way to raise money.

“It’s so extraordinary that an ordinary person like myself can do something extraordinary, can make a commitment that shows people that what is motivating me is important.” Mr. Carroll said. “I think that motivation becomes contagious.”

Charity has long been a part of the Boston Marathon. While officials at the Boston Athletic Association, the organizer of the race, acknowledge the large sums of money generated by people running for charity, they officially recognize only 15 charities that go through an application process.

Those official charities raised \$5.47 million last year and have raised \$26.9 million since 1994, according to Julia Beeson, a media coordinator at the Boston Athletic Association.

Phil DiSalvo of Chelmsford will run his sixth Boston Marathon tomorrow. He has run for the American Kidney Foundation in past marathons. But after watching his girlfriend, Karen Bouvier of Spencer, struggle with breast cancer at the UMass Breast Center during the past five months, he decided to raise money for the center.

“Seeing what she’s going through, I figured this would be a perfect opportunity to raise money for the clinic,” said Mr. DiSalvo, a hardware engineer at Compaq. “They never have enough money for equipment and those people are in need of immediate attention.”

Mr. DiSalvo is raising money for a portable ultrasound machine. The machine, which weighs about 5 pounds, can be used in the breast clinic, an emergency department or elsewhere. It costs about 25,000.

Ms. Bouvier said she also wants to give something back for being treated so well at the breast clinic.

“They’ve been wonderful to me there, said Ms. Bouvier. “One of the things I love about it is that, when I go, I feel like I am the only cancer patient there.”

She said she has been helping Mr. DiSalvo with administrative tasks related to the fundraiser, as well as being a Compaq event coordinator for the marathon. Compaq is a marathon sponsor and is responsible for the timing and tracking chips that runners wear on their shoelaces.

Jaime A. Flores of Worcester is certainly no newcomer to running in the marathon to raise money for worthy causes. A part-time case manager at AIDS Project Worcester, Mr. Flores will raise money this year to help offset cuts in the agency’s budget and services.

Running in his 22nd Boston Marathon tomorrow, Mr. Flores has helped the Homeless Outreach Advocacy Project and the Great Brook Valley Health Center in the past.

About \$10 million in state cuts to programs such as APW have left the agency with no counseling or testing services, said Mr. Flores, who has raised \$2,000 to \$3,000 in past races.

“We know that we are not going to get tons of money,” he said. “I do it mainly to keep alive the issue that AIDS is still far away from disappearing. On the contrary, it is probably growing.”

Charles Desourdy is a sort of free-agent runner for Ali & Dad’s Army, raising money to support pediatric cancer research at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. Ali Pierce of Sterling died at 14 of liver cancer, and her father, John died a year later of a heart attack while running a half marathon in her memory.

Mr. Desourdy, who works in the information services department at UMass, is running his first official marathon, but a worthwhile cause. He said people at UMass got word that he qualified for the marathon and approached him about running for Ali & Dad’s Army. He said he began fund raising a bit late, but he hopes to raise \$5,000 for the charity.

Contributions to Charity

- Contributions to Brendan's Buddies may be made to the Children's Medical Center, UMass Memorial Medical Center, c/o Brian K. Carroll, Carroll Enterprises Inc., 542 Main St., Worcester, MA 01608, or pledge online at www.brendansbuddies.com.

- Contributions and pledges to AIDS Project Worcester can be made by calling (508) 755-3773 or on the Web site at www.aidsprojectworcester.org.

- Contributions to the UMass Breast Center may be made by check or money order to the UMass Memorial Foundation, Breast Center/Marathon Campaign, Biotech 4, Suite 315, 377 Plantation St., Worcester, MA 01605, or call (866) 888-6277.

- Donations to All & Dad's Army may be made to Ali & Dad's Army, Biotech 4, Suite 315, 377 Plantation St., Worcester, MA 01605.