

"Two Trials" fundraiser is set to kick off on January 18th. Join me, Emily LeVan, at www.twotrials.org as I begin my training for the upcoming U.S. Olympic Trials - Women's Marathon and my fundraising to help research, treat, and cure childhood leukemia.

Why leukemia? On November 5, 2007, my daughter, Madeline (we call her Maddie), who will turn 4 on January 18th, was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia (ALL). Suffice it to say, that my husband Brad and I were devastated and crushed by this diagnosis. In early November, Maddie, Brad and I spent 10 days at the Barbara Bush Children's Hospital at Maine Medical Center in Portland, ME where she had numerous blood transfusions, x-rays, ultrasounds, spinal taps, bone marrow biopsies, and chemotherapy. Our world was completely turned upside down. We learned that we were embarking on a new kind of marathon; one that, if all goes well, will last the next 2-3 years of Maddie's life.

Since we were sent home from the hospital, we've developed a new kind of routine; one that involves weekly trips to Maine Medical Center in Portland or the Maine Children's Cancer Program Clinic in Scarborough. In terms of the leukemia, Maddie's body has responded well to the treatments; her blood levels and bone marrow biopsies are all very encouraging. We are tested, however, by the day to day challenges of fighting this disease. While the chemotherapy drugs and other supportive medications are doing a good job of knocking out the cancer, the results do come at a cost. The side effects of the medications are numerous and challenge all of us daily. We keep charging ahead, though.

Why a fundraiser? Throughout these last several weeks, we have been amazed and inspired by the support offered to sick children and their families at the Barbara Bush Children's Hospital and especially at the Maine Children's Cancer Program (MCCP). This illness touches every aspect of our lives and places significant financial, physical, mental, and emotional strain on us. MCCP has lessened the burden for us and helped make this journey seem manageable.

Brad, Maddie and I feel incredibly fortunate to have these resources available to us and we want to ensure that other families in the future can continue to benefit from the support and programs offered by the MCCP. That said, we are organizing a fundraiser for the Maine Children's Cancer Program that will run concurrently with my training for the Olympic Trials in April. When Maddie was initially diagnosed, I thought the Trials would be thrown out the window; I had no idea how I could possibly manage her treatment, work, family and training. I'm still not quite sure how I'll manage it, but Brad, Maddie and I decided as a family that I should do it.

I love running and I have benefited in ways I could never have imagined from the sport, but it is a very self-serving endeavor. I feel that right now I have the opportunity to use the running to benefit something beyond and greater than me. Both Brad and I feel strongly about giving back to our local community and we see this fundraiser and its beneficiary as a way that we can do so.

Come visit our fundraising website to learn more! The website www.twotrials.org will consist of (1) a marathon training log describing number of miles run each day, type of workout, how I felt, etc. Log will be updated daily, (2) A treatment log for Maddie which will be updated weekly, (3) general information about childhood cancer, (4) information about the Maine Children's Cancer Program with a link to their donation page (5) a section for people to post comments and questions, (6) photo gallery, (7) information about a fundraising carbo-loading dinner and rafffle to be held a few weeks before the Trials in Maine (8) information about the Olympic Trials - Women's Marathon which takes place on April 20th on Boston, MA.

My goal is to raise \$52,400 (runners should understand the significance of that amount, as Maddie and I are now running two marathons) for the Maine Children's Cancer Program during the roughly 3 month period that the fundraiser will be running. Every dollar donated will go directly to the Maine Children's Cancer Program. The fundraiser will run (no pun intended) from January 18th, which is Maddie's 4th birthday, through the Olympic Trials on April 20th.

Why donate to this cause when there are so many great causes out there? Great question! Maybe you decide to give to this cause because you're a runner and understand the challenge of training for a big race under even the best of circumstances. Maybe you decide to give because you have been touched in some way by cancer. Maybe you decide to give because you want kids to be able to be kids. You want their biggest worry to be if they will be able to stay at the beach all day playing in the sand and salty ocean water and not if they will be stuck again with a needle, if their hair will fall out, or if they will even feel like playing in the sand at the beach again. Whatever your reason for giving, know that every donation (however big or small) helps us toward our ultimate goal. You can be a part of the journey through this new marathon and you can help us reach the finish line.

Contact emily@twotrials.org with questions.