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News

Runners Raise Funds for Charity

Students support Phillips Brooks, Project HEALTH in Marathon Challenge

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Besides climbing Newton's notorious Heartbreak Hill, Anne R. Levenson '09 faced another daunting hurdle as she ran yesterday's Boston Marathon: a restriction from eating crucial carbohydrates the night before the race, as part of her observance of Passover.

Along with her fellow runners in the Harvard College Marathon Challenge (HCMC), Levenson—a self-proclaimed “casual athlete”—not only managed to finish the 26.2-mile course, but also raised money in the process for the Phillips Brooks House Association and Project HEALTH.

“It was fantastic, it was so much fun,” Levenson said. “The crowd was the best part, by far. Wellesley was especially amazing—there were so many screaming girls.”

Wellesley College, in the 13th mile of the course, is famed for its cheering “Scream Tunnel.”

The Boston Marathon is New England's most widely viewed sporting event, with roughly 500,000 spectators lining the course.

The course begins in Hopkinton and proceeds through Ashland, Framingham, Natick, and Wellesley before winding into Boston and ending at Copley Square.

While the marathon is open to men and women from any nation, most runners must qualify for the race. But HCMC, along with other charity fund-raiser groups, is awarded a small number of entries to the race.

Sam B. Novey '11 entered the marathon only a few weeks ago, when HCMC received roughly 12 extra slots.

“I've wanted to do it for a while, and basically the operative philosophy that I approach college with is that if it's supposed to be a bad idea, you've got to do it,” Novey said.

While Novey said he is a “spontaneous runner” who often runs in the middle of the night, other members of HCMC have been preparing for the marathon for months.

For most of them, snowy winter weather is no excuse not to run outside.

“People have different tolerances for how much they can run on a treadmill. No one likes the treadmill,” Kreg E. Moccia '10 said.

Many of the HCMC participants do not have extensive running credentials beyond high school athletics. Moccia has never ran competitively except in a preparatory half-marathon in February.

“I had a job over the summer that allowed me to have a period of time every day with not too much to do, so I just started running every day,” Moccia said. “I didn't really have huge inspirations or anything, I just found it was something I could keep up even after school started.”

Levenson ran cross-country for two years and track for a year in high school. “I didn't like it. It was boring,” Levenson said. “You just run around and around on a track, you feel like a hamster on a wheel.”

To train for the marathon, many of the runners adhered to a regimen of three or four-hour runs on weekdays, followed by incrementally lengthening “long runs” on weekends.

For these runners, training was no chore.

“It feels good to work up some sweat, breathe a little heavier. After spending all day with computers, reading books and stuff, and with Annenberg giving you unlimited food, you gotta shake off the crust,” Novey said. Levenson described her weekday runs with her friend as her “hour of chit-chat.”

All the runners said that the marathon is definitely an achievable goal for anyone with enough determination and ambition.

"I remember when I started running, I thought one mile was impossible. You just slowly, slowly add miles. If I can do it, anyone can do it," Levenson said.

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