

A Reason to Run

WHETHER IT'S THE GRUELING 26.2 MILES OF A MARATHON OR A FUN AND FESTIVE 5K, ALUMNI ARE UTILIZING THE PHYSICAL CHALLENGE OF RUNNING TO REMEMBER FALLEN HEROES AND SUPPORT WOUNDED VETERANS.

On 31 October, 30,000 runners gathered in Washington, DC, for the 35th annual Marine Corps Marathon (MCM), and another 10,000 runners took part in the Marine Corps Marathon 10K which runs simultaneously. Among these runners were many Naval Academy alumni, family and friends, who could also be found lining the sidelines, cheering on the participants as they embraced the 26.2 mile challenge. The race embraces not only the commitment to physical fitness embodied by the Marine Corps, but the dedication to a physical mission that all alumni adhere to from their first days at the Academy. It also provides participants an opportunity to



embrace a physical challenge that is also an excellent forum to show support and honor fallen alumni.

Run to Honor (RTH) is one such group founded by Naval Academy alumni that has embraced the challenge of running to honor fallen Naval Academy graduates. Started by members of the Class of 1995, it was initially founded in conjunction with the MCM to provide the opportunity for friends and families to run in remembrance of their fallen classmates.

“In 2007 we lost our sixth classmate in either combat or training accidents since graduation,” said Jeff Webb ’95, co-chair of RTH. “A group of us said, ‘Let’s do something beyond going to funerals and memorial services.’ We wanted to do something special to honor them.”

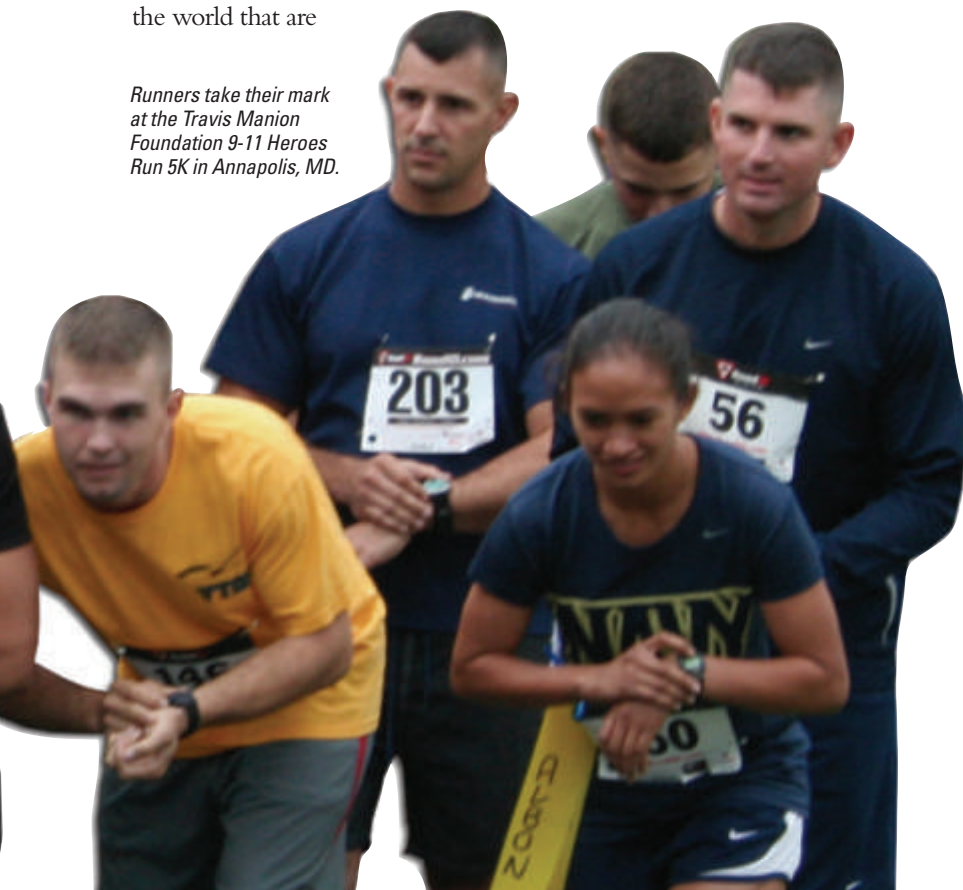
What began as an opportunity to recognize their friends and classmates quickly grew to include all fallen Naval Academy alumni.

“Most people that are involved have a connection specifically to someone who has died, but even if someone did not know a person who has been killed, we share the base of all being from the Naval Academy where we feel that we are all shipmates,” said Giovanna Kostrubala ’95, RTH co-chair.

Prior to the marathon and 10K each year, a memorial dinner is held to celebrate the lives of the fallen that they are running for, as well as to remember their families, many of whom attend the event.

“We have people all over the world that are

Runners take their mark at the Travis Manion Foundation 9-11 Heroes Run 5K in Annapolis, MD.



The starting line for the 2010 Marine Corps Marathon.

Happy Birthday!

In 2010, as the Marine Corps celebrates its monumental 235th birthday, the Marine Corps Marathon (MCM) also

celebrates a milestone, the 35th anniversary of its founding.

The inaugural MCM was held on 7 November 1976, with 1,175 runners. Colonel Jim Fowler, USMC, is credited with the idea for the marathon to foster community goodwill, and both promote the Marine Corps and serve as a recruiting tool. The very next year

the number of participants more than doubled to 2,655 and has continued to grow in popularity with an impressive 30,000 runners in the 35th annual MCM this year.

The fourth largest marathon in the United States and the eighth largest in the world, it is referred to as “The People’s Marathon” as the only marathon in the world that doesn’t offer prize money. The run attracts runners from all walks of life and around the world. The marathon, which begins adjacent to Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, VA, leads runners on a scenic route through Rosslyn and Georgetown, circling the Jefferson Memorial, down the National Mall, in front of the Capitol Building, through Crystal City and around the Pentagon to its finish at the Marine Corps War Memorial.

The weekend features additional events including a 10K that is held simultaneously with the Marathon which attracts an additional 10,000 runners, a Health and Fitness Expo, the Healthy Kids Fun Run, Crystal Run (a festival in Crystal City) and the Marine Corps Marathon Finish Festival.

There are also several satellite events and runs that occur in conjunction with the

Continued on page 13



supportive of this,” said Kostrubala. “People that are on deployment, some people run while they are deployed. We even had one of our classmates who ran in Athens, Greece, on the original marathon route, wearing a Run to Honor shirt.”

Another group that participates each year in the MCM and 10K in honor of a fallen alumni is Team Travis, which is sponsored by the Travis Manion Foundation. In 2007, First Lieutenant Travis Manion '04, USMC, was training to run the MCM with his father, Colonel Tom Manion, USMCR, and family friend, Brigadier General Dave Papak '76, USMC (Ret.), when he was killed by a sniper bullet during his second tour of Afghanistan.

“We had registered and had gotten Travis a number for the race, but then he was killed at the end of April,” said General Papak. “At that point we had his number, I was still

training and Tom was still training and we started just slowly talking about it. Then all these people said they wanted to get a group together and run in Travis’s honor.”

Lieutenant Manion’s Naval Academy roommate and good friend, Lieutenant Brendan Looney '04, USN, a Navy SEAL, ran the marathon with General Papak and Colonel Manion, who was wearing his son’s race number, along with a group of fellow friends, family and supporters as Team Travis. That same year the Travis Manion Foundation was established. His family created the Foundation to assist wounded veterans and the families of fallen servicemen. Not only does the 9/11 Heroes Run help raise funds, but brings awareness to the Foundation’s mission.

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Continued from page 11

“Part of the proceeds go to the Travis Manion Foundation to support our fellowship program for wounded and disabled men and women returning from the line of duty,” said Ryan Manion Borek, Lieutenant Manion’s sister and executive director of the Foundation. “Another part of our proceeds go to local organizations at each of the race sites that support our firefighters, police and EMTs.”

Tragically, in 2010, Lieutenant Looney was also killed while serving in Afghanistan in a helicopter crash. When he was laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery, the body of his friend Lieutenant Manion was moved from the Cemetery where he’d been interred in his home state of Pennsylvania, to be buried beside Lieutenant Looney. At the 2010 MCM, the special shirts worn by all the Team Travis runners paid homage to their remarkable friendship, by honoring both of these heroes.

The MCM is just one of many running events alumni participate in to show support. There are many other runs and events throughout the year leading up to the marathon, as well as individual runs that support specific causes that not only recognize fallen Marine alumni, but support injured servicemen and their families.

The Travis Manion Foundation also supports one such run, the Travis Manion Foundation 9-11 Heroes Run 5K, which was held in Annapolis for the first time in September. Originating three years ago in Doylestown, PA, the run is now held annually in six locations nationwide, and its founders hope it will continue to grow.

“Our goal is to one day be in all 50 states,” said Borek. “The idea of the 9-11 Heroes Run is that it’s less about the run, more about community and people

Marathon throughout the year, leading up to the Marathon itself.

These include the Run Amuck, Crossroads 17.75K, the Turkey Trot 10K and the Irish Sprint One-Miler, which are all held at Marine Corps Base Quantico, as well as the Marine Corps Historic-Half Marathon which is held in scenic Fredericksburg, VA. All of these events, as well as the marathon, are hosted by the Marine Corps Base at Quantico, which assumed responsibility for planning the MCM in the early 1980s.

In 2006, the MCM held its first event during race week outside of the United States, at Al Asad Airbase in Iraq. Under the direction of Major Megan McClung ‘95, USMC, the MCM Forward boasted 109 finishers. Tragically, that same year, Major McClung became the first female U.S. Marine Corps Officer to be killed in combat and the first female graduate from the Naval Academy to be killed in action. She is also one of the fallen members of the Class of ‘95 alumni who were first recognized in Run to Honor.

A year after her death, the Major Megan McClung Memorial Run, which is a 10K/5K run and a 5K walk held at Naval Air Station, Whidbey Island, WA, was founded. The race is held not only to remember Major McClung, but also to

raise money in support of the Injured Marines Semper Fi Fund. A satellite 5K is also held at Camp Leatherneck in Afghanistan.



At this year’s Marine Corps Marathon, members of Team Travis ran with shirts that bore the name of both Travis Manion and his friend and Naval Academy roommate Brendan Looney. 2010 also marked the fourth year that runners with Run to Honor have participated in the Marine Corps Marathon and 10K. Photos by Carolyn Andros ‘95

U.S. Marine Corps Athlete of the Year

While physical fitness is an essential part of being a member of the United States Marine Corps, each year one female and one male Marine are recognized as the Marine Corps Athletes of the Year. This year, Captain Robert Hillery '03, USMC, was selected for this honor. In 2009, Captain Hillery competed in more than 39 endurance races while stationed at Camp Pendleton, CA, consistently placing in the top five for his age group. These included three ultramarathons, seven triathlons, three ironman or half ironman competitions, 19 full or half marathons and several 10Ks and 5Ks. These numbers alone are impressive, but even more so when you consider that Captain Hillery did not compete in his first triathlon until August of 2008.

The award not only recognizes Captain Hillery's athletic performance, but his community involvement and support of the Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund. During the Kona Ironman alone, he raised nearly \$16,000 for the Fund.

In 2010, Captain Hillery and fellow Naval Academy graduate Captain Mosi Smith '05, USMC, launched a fundraising campaign called the Marines "1 in 10." Their goal is to raise \$1 million for the Semper Fi Fund collectively through all the endurance races they participate in.

For more information on Captain Hillery and the Marines "1 in 10" visit www.active.com/donate/SemperFiFund10/Marines1in10.



Captain Hillery running in the Rock and Roll Seattle Marathon. In every endurance race he competes in for Marines "1 in 10," Captain Hillery proudly runs with the American flag. Photo courtesy of Captain Hillery

coming out and showing their support for all of our service members: police, firefighters and EMTs as well."

Equally as important as the funds raised and the mission it supports, the run gives the friends, family and classmates of Lieutenant Manion an opportunity to remember and honor their fallen hero, just as the members of Team Travis do during the MCM and 10K. Even runners and volunteers on race day who may not have known Lieutenant Manion or the Manion family can be part of a truly moving and profound experience, knowing that through the Foundation they are supporting the service men and women who have paid the ultimate sacrifice for their freedom.

"I became involved in the run because I was good friends with Travis Manion, I am an academy graduate like him and I served in the fleet Marine force with him," said Captain Paul Fischer '03, USMC, who took part in the inaugural Annapolis 9-11 Heroes Run. "I'm honored to be here at the race, just to help out. Anything we can do, all his friends and everyone here is just coming out to support the Manion family and the organization as a whole."

"It means everything to me," continued Captain Fischer. "Anything I can do to help out the Travis Manion Foundation or honor his memory is really the least I can do for everything that he has done for the country."

Another run that is held in honor of a Naval Academy alumni, the Colonel Ripley Memorial Fuel 4 Life 5K, held its second annual event this year. Created by Naval Academy graduates Jon Brianas '00 and Adam Borcz '01, their company Turning Point Sports manages the event.

"Turning Point Sports focus is on promoting physical fitness, health and active living for all ages," said Borcz. "This allows us to pursue a lot of great initiatives, both supporting the Semper Fi Fund and the Colonel Ripley Run, and at the same time allowing us to pursue our mission, which is to promote healthy active living."

The race celebrates the life and legacy of its namesake, Colonel John Ripley '62, USMC (Ret.), a Naval Academy hero and Distinguished Graduate who was awarded the Navy Cross for extraordinary heroism in destroying the Dong Ha Bridge during the April 1972 North Vietnamese Easter Offensive. The amazing story of "Ripley at the Bridge" is memorialized in a large diorama in the Naval Academy's Memorial Hall.

The funds raised by the race go to support the Injured Marines Semper Fi Fund, which provides financial support for injured members of U.S. Armed Forces and their families. The Fund directs urgently needed resources to Marines and Sailors, as well as members of the Army, Air Force and Coast Guard who serve in support of Marine forces.

"The financial support from the Colonel Ripley Memorial 5K is beautiful because we need those funds right now to help the families," said Karen Guenther,

“The race is a tribute to a legendary Marine, that benefits the Marines and Sailors of today.”

—Adam Borcz '01

president and CEO, who founded the Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund in 2003. “But it’s more than the financial support. It’s giving visibility to this effort. Visibility to the attention that is needed for our service members.”

Guenther, a nurse whose Marine husband was deployed to Iraq at the time, had the unique opportunity of working at Camp Pendleton Hospital when these first medevacs returned.

“It started small with toiletries, toothpaste and socks and as the war continued, the needs grew and became more critical,” said Guenther. “We realized it was not just at Camp Pendleton, there were needs at Bethesda, Walter Reed and Camp Lejeune, and so we started the Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund.”

“The race is a tribute to a legendary Marine, that benefits the Marines and Sailors of today,” said Borcz. “We are doing the second annual run this year, last year we raised a little over \$9,000 for the Semper Fi Fund. We had about 450 racers and we expect to have probably over 1,000 runners this year and will raise anywhere between \$20,000 to \$25,000 for the Semper Fi Fund.”

Whatever their motivation, whenever alumni tie on running shoes and join the ranks of classmates, fellow alumni, family and friends in support of these runs and many others like them, it takes the message of honor, support and sacrifice to the streets ... literally. †

For more information on Run to Honor visit www.usnaruntohonor.blogspot.com; for the Travis Manion Foundation and the 9-11 Heroes Run visit www.travismanion.com; and for the Colonel Ripley Memorial Fuel for Life 5K and the Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund, visit www.turningpointssports.org and www.semperfi.org.


To learn more about the Marine Corps Marathon and all related runs and events, visit www.marinemarathon.com.

These are just a few of the alumni groups and memorial runs that take place around the country and world each year. If you have a run that you participate in, or an alumni cause that you support, please share it with Shipmate at shipmate@usna.com.



Members of Team Semper Fi with the race’s founders, Adam Borcz '01 and Jon Brianas '00, and the family of Colonel John Ripley '62, USMC (Ret.), who presented the award to the overall winner of the race, participated in the second annual Colonel Ripley Memorial Fuel 4 Life 5K. Proceeds from the race support the Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund.

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 Visit www.usna.com for video of the Marine Corps Marathon, the Travis Manion Foundation 9-11 Heroes Run 5K and the Colonel Ripley Memorial Fuel for Life 5K.