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Miami long-distance runner raises money for children's cancer center

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Article Text:

Some people like to cook or play golf or sail for fun. But Dave Krupski's idea of a good time is running. And running some more.

"Running [is] an outlet for me, the time of the day I have for myself, just to hit the reset button a little bit," said Krupski, a Brickell lawyer. "It's a hell of a lot cheaper than a therapist."

Krupski runs 10 to 20 miles and two to three hours every day. His normal route starts in Brickell and takes him across the Rickenbacker Causeway and back. He runs morning and nights, and sometimes on his lunch break.

"I don't remember the last day I didn't run," he said.

Krupski isn't the only who benefits from his running. He's the founder of a charity that raises money for Alex's Place, the children's cancer center at University of Miami Miller School of Medicine Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center. As he prepares for a race, he solicits donations from within the tight community of South Florida runners.

“I didn’t want it to just be about me,” he said. ! “I wanted it to be about something bigger than myself.”

Krupski began his latest race on Monday at the Badwater Ultramarathon, known as the “toughest footrace in the world.” The 135-mile race, which starts in Death Valley and ends at Mt. Whitney, Calif., spans the equivalent of 2,376 football fields. It takes 24 to 48 hours in temperatures of up to 130 degrees — across two mountain ranges. The ground is so hot that participants must run on white painted lines so the soles of their shoes do not melt.

He has taken several trips to California this year for depositions, and took time off to go train in Death Valley. While the mountain ranges were a challenge for a Miamian, the lack of humidity made the heat more tolerable.

Badwater is Krupski’s 10th race of more than 100 miles. Earlier this year, he placed first in the men’s group for the Keys 100 marathon, a race that begins at mile marker 100 in Key Largo and goes all the way to mile marker 0 in Key West.

Krupski, 36, says he became interested in ultrarunning when he realized in 26-mile marathons, competitors were consistently running less-than-five-minute miles, which he can’t do.

“I was never going to be a world class marathoner,” Krupski said.

But ultrarunning is not about sprinting. Age, gender and other physical differences don’t matter, Krupski said.

“It doesn’t discriminate,” he said. “The people who do best in these things are the people who train the hardest, and that really appeals to me.”

Krupski founded his charity in the spring, around the time that he was running the Keys 100 race. He says he wanted to focus on funding cancer research and treatment centers because many members of his family have had cancer.

The time he spends away from his family while running, and all of the friends who help him during his races, made him want to commit to a bigger cause.

“Running in general, but especially! ultrarunning. ... It’s an incredibly selfish endeavor,” Krupski said.

He says he and his wife Alex, also a runner, chose Alex’s Place because of its commitment to quality of life.

Alex's Place is an outpatient facility for children that focuses on making the treatment process comfortable. The facility is equipped with computers, iPads, toys, a classroom and other types of technology aimed at keeping the children happy.

"The whole idea is to make it seem as little like a hospital as possible," Krupski said.

For example, treatment rooms have projectors aimed at the ceiling, which make it appear that fish are swimming across.

Director Dr. Julio Barredo said efforts like Krupski's are critical in raising awareness for pediatric cancer.

"Cancer treatment is really a team effort," Barredo said. "It really takes involvement of the community at large and people like him in order to be able to do what we do."

As government funding for pediatric cancer treatment has dwindled, Barredo said, there is a growing need for private donors. Currently only about 2 percent of money for cancer research goes toward pediatrics, he said.

"Unfortunately, kids don't vote," Barredo said.

Bringing attention to pediatric cancer is critical in gaining support and more funding, Barredo said. Krupski's commitment to raising money ensures that many will find out about the cause.

"In a marathon, it's not only them but everybody who finds out about it or donates to it," Barredo said. "It has a multiplier effect."

Krupski finds that running and training for races is a fitting way to raise money for the cause.

"I'm voluntarily subjecting myself to suffering to sort of shine the spotlight on their struggles and help them as much as possible," Krupski said.

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