

PH Community Fuels PHe-nomenal Hope 5K Run

MARCH 31, 2016 – When runners and walkers warm up for the PHe-nomenal Hope 5K Run on April 10, someone who knows firsthand about pulmonary hypertension will be there to guide and cheer them on. Race director and founder Julia Feitner has a personal reason for her commitment – she lives with idiopathic pulmonary arterial hypertension.

“Although I can’t even walk 5K, I am excited to put my energy into creating something that will help raise awareness and money toward a cure,” said Feitner, who was 34-weeks pregnant with her second son when she learned she had the disease. “Pulmonary hypertension is an incurable, often terminal disease, and we are working hard to change that. All proceeds from the event will go toward much needed research.”

This marks the third year of the event. Race day will kick off with registration and check-in at 8:30 a.m. at Riverfront Park, North Shore in Pittsburgh, followed by a 1/2 mile Kids’ Race at 9:30 a.m. The 5K Run and 1-Mile Fun Walk begin at 10 a.m. Heinz Field Boat Launch is the start/finish line for all races, with the flat course winding along North Shore Riverfront Trail. Awards for the 1-Mile Fun Walk and 5K Run will fall into gender and age categories.

In addition to the race, there also will be opportunities to win prizes, as well as family-friendly activities, including a visit from the Pirate Parrot and face painting.

According to Dr. Patricia George, a pulmonologist with the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, sporting events like the 5K Run are ideal platforms to draw attention to life-threatening diseases such as pulmonary hypertension.

“We promote using ultra-endurance sports both to educate people about PH, and the need for a cure, as well as to inspire others to rally to this cause,” said George, co-founder of Team PHe-nomenal Hope, the 5K Run’s premier sponsor. “I was one of the original four bike racers on Team PH, and it was friends, teammates and people like Julia who inspired me to help found our nonprofit in 2012.”

Feitner, who learned she had PH in 2008, echoes George’s sentiment.

“This type of event really can draw attention to the challenges PH patients face,” she said. “The pulmonologist who diagnosed me said that he didn’t expect me, or our baby to survive. In fact, several other PH centers declined to treat me because they considered my condition hopeless.”

Feitner eventually sought care at UPMC, where she found the right medical teams and a reason to fight on. After a series of medications and a successful clinical trial, she now is able to care for her two young boys and to live a relatively normal life. She said this is the best she has felt since her diagnosis.

“Our efforts through ultra-endurance events, along with the PH community’s hard work and passion, have made Team PH a real success,” George said. “We hope that what we are doing will inspire others to take on their own fundraising and awareness campaigns or to donate to ours. We CAN make an impactful difference in the lives of those with PH.”

To learn more about race, go to <http://phenomenalhope5K.com>. Visit <http://teamphenomenalhope.org/> for more information about Team PHe-nomenal Hope.