

This is what we were meant to do

West Hospital team brings the excitement of participating in a race to those who cannot walk

It was a beautiful morning for a run...a typical humid August day for an atypical 5k "Cheetah Run" at the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Gardens. What was so special about this 3.1 mile run was that two participants would not have been able to participate if it weren't for so many people—truly a team effort that allowed Stephen "Stevie" and Armstead "Majestic" their moment of victory.

Runners from Mercy Health — West Hospital and a student from Xavier University came together to ensure that Stevie and Majestic, two local boys with disabilities, had the run of their lives. The West Hospital team, comprised of doctors, nurses and representatives from pharmacy, infusion, wound care, physical therapy and occupational therapy, trained under Run for Greatness, Inc. guidelines to safely push the boys in special chairs designed for them.

Run for Greatness, Inc. is a non-profit organization that provides people with disabilities (especially children) a chance to participate in and benefit from the excitement and sense of accomplishment that finishing a race provides. Run for Greatness, Inc. empowers these children to be part of the community, part of a team, and to participate in something that will impact both the children and the runners for years to come. This race was no exception.

"These boys had never participated in an event like the Cheetah Run before," said Diane Cucinotta, nursing manager of the Wound Care Center and Infusion Center at West Hospital. "Our team was committed to giving them a run to remember. Seeing the boys' smiles during the race and their excitement when they crossed the finish line showed we had succeeded!"

The Auxiliary of West Hospital sponsored the boys' run and Mercy Health supports the Cheetah Run as part of its "Walk on the Wild Side" partnership.

Diane hopes that other Mercy Health teams will join with Run for Greatness in support of area children with disabilities. "There are countless other children who want to take part in a run. It would be great to help accommodate many, many more of them," she said. "This type of experience does wonders for employee engagement as well. It also encompasses all aspects of the Be Well Within program—mind, body and spirit, so it's an all-around win!"

Anne Stone, Mercy Health's Well-Being Leader, pointed out that in addition to bringing new experiences to disabled children, participating in activities like Run for Greatness

are worth points on the Be Well Within site. "You can participate in up to two events each session for 25 points each." She also noted that the Go Santa Go 5K run at Blue Ash's Summit Park on November 29 would be a fun event for a Run for Greatness team.

If you are interested in helping disabled children experience the joy of a run and the sense of accomplishment that crossing a finish line brings, visit Run for Greatness at run4gr8ness.org. Or you can contact Diane at dxccucinotta@mercy.com to learn more about the West Hospital team's experience.



Stevie and Majestic experience their first race thanks to a team of volunteer runners.