

On Running By Ira Josephs

Mothers race for legacy of the heart

Six Chester County women are planning the race of their lives. They're not running the Mommy's Light 5K on April 30 in Exton. There's no time for that. They'll be too busy directing, organizing, and administering several hundred runners on race day.

All six are mothers themselves or expecting. The president of Mommy's Light is Downingtown's Laura Munts, a former marathon runner who was dear friends with Mary Murphy, a single mother from Newtown Square who died of a rare form of cancer in 1998. The year before, Murphy founded Mommy's Light, whose objective is to give children whose mothers have died a way to continue traditions they once enjoyed with their mothers.

"Mary had wisdom of the heart," said Munts, a lawyer who helped Murphy incorporate Mommy's Light as a nonprofit. "Mommy's Light is saying let's keep those traditions. Honor the past, celebrate the present, and build for the future."

Downingtown's Hillary DeLone has embraced those words. After being diagnosed with Stage 2 breast cancer last year at age 33, DeLone is now cancer-free after three surgeries, chemotherapy and radiation.

Mother of two, DeLone wanted to do something for families that weren't as fortunate in their fight against cancer. DeLone discovered Mommy's Light, and she decided a 5K run would be the best way to raise funds.

The initial goal was to raise \$10,000 to \$12,000; DeLone said that has already been doubled. Kensey Nash, a medical-device company, signed on as the title sponsor, and several other companies also have joined the effort.

In addition to Munts and DeLone, the committee includes Downingtown's Kristin Walton,



Mommy's Light 5K run organizers Hillary DeLone (left) and Kristin Walton swing their daughters, Natalie DeLone and Chloe Walton, both 2. DeLone's cancer fight pushed her to become involved.

RON TARVER / Inquirer Staff Photographer

Gina Glancy and Stacey Krapf, and Chester Springs' Tara Todd.

Walton and Todd are the runners in the group. Walton, 35, is a 1988 graduate of Downingtown High, where she played lacrosse. She also played club soccer, but it wasn't until after graduating from West Chester University that she got serious about running.

"I've always been into sports and run in some capacity," said Walton, a member of the Fast Tracks Running Club in Valley Forge. "Sometimes more diligently than others."

On Oct. 28, 2001, she ran the Marine Corps Marathon — her first attempt at the 26.2-mile distance — only a few months after her son Luke was born. She and husband Craig are expecting their third child in July. Craig also is a runner, and the couple ran the Chicago Marathon together in 2003.

"We use it as a way to spend

time together," said Walton, who has completed seven marathons and has qualified for Boston with a best of 3 hours, 39 minutes, 1 second.

A friend of DeLone's, Walton was eager to help with Mommy's Light.

"Her illness has brought us closer together," Walton said. "Running to help mothers works so well. It's kind of a natural thing. Once you become a mom, you realize how important family is to you."

Todd, 26, who also is pregnant, is a personal trainer and an avid runner. Her husband, Ryan Todd, ran for Devon Prep in the early '90s. Like the Waltons, the Todds race together.

"I found the runner's high is better than any competitive sport," said Tara Todd, who played basketball and soccer at Lacey Township High in New Jersey.

The only high that might compare, Todd said, is the one that comes with helping others.

"It's a great group of women to work with," she said. "They like to get things done. People have been awesome about it."

Race details. The Mommy's Light 5K is set for 9 a.m. at the Eagleview Corporate Center in Exton. For more information about Mommy's Light and the race, check www.mommys-light.org.

Finishing kick. The Solebury "Spirit" 5K, originally scheduled yesterday, was postponed until 10 a.m. Sunday because of flooding. The race is the second of the seven Bucks 5K Series. For information, check www.bucks5kseries.com. The fourth annual Swarthmore Charity Fun-Fair 5K Run is scheduled for noon April 17. For more information, check www.swarthmorefair.org.

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