LHS teachers raising money for charity to run New York City Marathon



Louisburg High School physical education teachers Joel McGhee and Shelby Suther were selected by Marathon Kids to run in the New York City Marathon this November. Both teachers are currently raising money for the charity in order to run in the event.

Two physical education teachers from Louisburg High School are taking their passion for health and fitness to the streets of New York City—26.2 miles of them, to be exact.

This November, Shelby Suther and Joel McGhee will lace up their running shoes to compete in the legendary New York City Marathon. But their goal goes far beyond crossing the finish line. They're running to raise money for Marathon Kids, a

nonprofit that empowers children to live active, healthy lives through running programs across the country.

“I always said I would never do a marathon unless it was New York City because the chances to get in are so slim,” Suther said. “For me, running has been a big part of my life since middle school and now getting to run and make an impact for a charity is pretty cool. It is harder to give up on yourself when you know you are doing something to raise money for a charity and I think it sets a good example for the kids we teach.”

The teachers have launched a fundraising campaign ahead of the race, hoping to raise at least $4,000 each to support Marathon Kids’ programming in schools. The funds will help provide teaching resources, incentives, and tracking tools that encourage kids to run.

Founded in 1995, Marathon Kids is a national nonprofit that empowers children to live healthier lives by running or walking a cumulative marathon, one mile at a time. The organization partners with schools and communities to promote lifelong fitness through goal-setting, tracking, and encouragement.

Both Suther and McGhee applied to run the New York City Marathan for Marathon Kids and were two of more than 70 applicants. The charity picks just 10 to run for them, and as it turned out, both Wildcat teachers were selected.

“It is the biggest marathon in the world,” McGhee said. “I think it goes back-and-forth between New York and London in what is the biggest. More than 56,000 people run the New York City Marathon and the odds of me being able to get in it myself are equivalent of me getting into Harvard. Knowing you submitted something to an organization, they like what you are about, and I match with what they are trying to do, is an amazing feeling. It is such a big event.”

The teachers were asked to share the stories about why they should be selected and both had different reasons for wanting to do it.

For Suther, who recently became a mother for the first time, not only wanted to show her students that it could be done, but wanted to prove it to herself.

“I never wanted to run a marathon before, but after I had Nash (her son), then I decided I wanted to challenge myself and prove that I could do it, even after being a mom,” Suther said. “That was my why for running, plus with being a life-long runner, coach and PE teacher. Marathon Kids’ mission to get more kids active is really important as they believe without movement that it causes more behavioral problems, attention-span problems where movement can help that.

“One of my other big things was I lost both of my grandparents in the last year or so, one to COPD and the other to cancer. They became immobile, which was a punch in the gut for me. Just opened my eyes that I need to do everything I can to keep myself healthy and active. Also, I want to be healthy for my son as well.”

As for McGhee, his journey started more than 8 years ago while as a teacher at Broadmoor Elementary.

“For me, running was always a part of sports and things that I had done,” McGhee said. “It was never a thing I really did after sports until we did a weight loss challenge at Broadmoor back in 2017. I weighed 225 at the time and it was a challenge that lasted for 10 weeks and I lost 50 pounds in that time.

“After that I joined the national guard and fitness played a big part in that. Always having that movement piece has played a big part and I want to show others what exercise can provide for you. I just want others, especially young people, to have the knowledge of how important this is as you get older.”

One caveat to being selected to run is both teachers must raise $4,000 for the Marathon Kids charity and they have spent the last several months reaching out trying to raise money for the worthy cause. There are 90 days left to raise those funds.

The teachers started an Instragram account called Louisburg Runs to help bring awareness and show their journey in preparing. Some of the students at the high school even helped get the word out as McGhee and Suther put together friendly competitions.

“We tried to do some competitions and the kids really caught on and helped us out with that,” McGhee said. “We wagered that whoever earned the most, would not have to do the hard yard, which most football guys know is pretty rough. I lost and I ended up doing that. The kids thought it was pretty funny.”

Along with the fundraising, the teachers are responsible for all travel, along with food and lodging. All donations are made online and go straight to Marathon Kids.

Both coaches have been training rigorously for the marathon, juggling early-morning runs, after-school workouts, and their full-time teaching responsibilities.

Back in March, McGhee competed in the Los Angeles Marathon, and both runners have taken part in several half-marathons around the area.

“As a teacher doing this, you are actually living out the mission you are trying to get across to your students and that really does mean a lot,” McGhee said.

To support McGhee’s fundraising efforts, click here.

To support Suther’s fundraising efforts, you can click here.