

December 1, 2010

Don and I are very excited to share with you what has been going on in our lives. You may know we have been very active with Charities Challenge (CC). CC, a non-profit organization, has as its mission: To Improve Health/Fitness, Reduce Health Risks, and Enhance Disease Management via Goal-oriented Rx Exercise Training Programs, Engaging Events & Active Partnerships.

Throughout the year CC produces 25 RxExercise run/walk events in the Twin Cities, **servicing about 5,000 individuals and families to rewarding exercise experiences with which we've been helping and sometimes racing.** Coaches Gary and Jeanne (CC Founders) coach both apparently healthy and health-challenged athletes to train for especially motivating goal events. They know themselves how important their own RxExercise is to living well beyond significant health challenges, arthritis and cancer, and having active friends to encourage them to stay strong.

What is so rewarding about CC's leaders and volunteers is the effective encouragement and recognition they provide to so many others through their special events and RxExercise programs. At events, from the first place finisher to the last walker, ages from 5-85, apparently healthy or health-challenged, they see all participants as winners because everyone is benefiting from their own RxExercise.

Each Challenge Event race relates RxExercise to a common health challenge, challenges like arthritis, depression, diabetes, cancer, and heart disease. Many of the racers come to race because of their chronic health challenges. **Don and I have learned well from our own physical struggles how vital exercise is for managing our health challenges.**

As I have struggled with health challenges of diabetes, bi-polar disorder, chronic leg and back pain, and the battle of obesity (50 lbs lost so far), participating with CC as both a volunteer and a race walker I have learned to face my challenges with action. I've seen first hand how RxExercise has improved my health especially my bi-polar struggles. So, both Don and I are now happier-healthier because of our RxExercise.

Don has had his share of health issues to overcome as well, challenges like high blood pressure, obesity (lost 140 lb), back surgery, and a pacemaker. Running RxExercise has helped him immensely. Since 2005 he's made a great comeback and run 14 marathons, and lots of other races of lesser distances than 26.2 miles. So, Don is not new to exercising or racing.

As for me I am new to RxExercise and walking 5ks. Since I could only walk a 3.1 mile race in about 55 minutes I decided volunteering at CC Events was a better option for me. **And, I enjoyed serving others' racing experiences as a CC volunteer.**

Then CC asked if Don and I would be RxExercise Ambassadors, and train to travel to the Disney World Marathon weekend of races, 5k, ½ marathon, and marathon, in January, 2011, telling our stories along the way to help inspire and encourage others' RxExercise.

This goal was no problem for Don, but for me there is a cut off time of about 49 minutes

for the 5k. I shared my frustration with Coach Gary who immediately took me over to a walking path and said, “Walk comfortably next to me for a short ways and let’s see how you’re walking”. We probably only walked 40-50 yards and he said “If you can walk this pace you can surely finish Disney’s 5k in the required time”.

So last spring I began to train, my last 5k race I finished in 43:47. I am now walking much faster as well as short runs in between. This is a lot faster than my first 5k, evidencing that I’ve become much stronger and healthier.

Because we believe in, actively support as race events volunteers, and practice CC’s RxExercise Mission, and **seeing how what we’re doing is improving our lives as well others’ lives, we feel honored to be RxExercise Ambassadors to Disney World Marathon next month.** I will be doing the Family & Friends 5K with Don on Friday, January 7, and Don will be running the Marathon on Sunday, January 9. Don and I will also be celebrating our 24th Wedding Anniversary on that Sunday in Disney World!

Our additional goal is to raise \$3,000 by December 31. We need your help to achieve this Charities Challenge RxExercise Ambassador fundraising goal.

Your tax-deductible donation to CC in our honor for the Disney World races, help support CC’s RxExercise Mission/Events and Programs, programs like our inspiring RxExercise Ambassadorship.

Please consider a donation to CC now at the close of 2010. We have included with our pledge card some donation options that will help us reach our goal.

We have also included a self-addressed stamped envelope in which to return your donation and pledge card.

Even if you are unable to give at this time please return the card with a note of encouragement to Don and me, and let us know if you would like a letter of how we did with a picture of us at our Disney World races. If we're lucky, maybe Mickey will be in the picture as well!

We also encourage you to learn more about CC and RxExercise at www.CharitiesChallenge.org And better yet, come walk, run, or just cheer on us and all the racers at any CC Event. You can view great slide shows of the races as well on the web site to see “Miles of Smiles” that come upon everyone’s faces as they finish a 5k.

We are honored, and happier-healthier, to be RxExercise Ambassadors. Thanks for your encouraging support.

Meredith & Don Soule

