

## LEAVE YOUR MARK

understands the mental toughness that it takes to fight muscle fatigue, silence self-doubt and push through the "wall."

"They [participants] need the encouragement, and most of us are marathon runners, so we know they just want to finish," Nixon remarks. "That's [location of Aid Station 20] the point where you're ready to cash it in and fellow runners know that."

For nearly nine hours, Nixon, McMiller and thousands of other volunteers will energize participants with their voices and their hands.

"It's really go, go, go. Non-stop," Nixon enthuses.

It's really go, go go.

Non-stop.

### Inspiring With Their Giving

#### Charities

Adding to the inspiring stories from the field, the partnership between the Bank of America Chicago Marathon and 123 charitable organizations leaves a significant mark on the lives of individuals, the community, the City of Chicago and the world by raising awareness and funds for specific causes.

Not surprisingly, the Bank of America Chicago Marathon serves as one of the largest annual one-day charity fundraisers in the City of Chicago.

In 2008, close to 7,300 charity runners added meaning to their marathon journey by collectively raising nearly \$10 million for their respective charities. Since 2002, the Charity

Program has raised more than \$48 million, and 8,000 runners participating in this year's Charity Program are expected to continue the trend by raising \$10 million.

For Christine Schneidt, marathon coordinator for Opportunity Enterprises (OE), a Valparaiso, Ind. charity that develops curriculum and service programs for individuals with developmental disabilities, the partnership with the Chicago Marathon and "OE Runners" provides a tremendous financial boost to what OE can offer to its community.

"The Chicago Marathon is our biggest fundraising program," Schneidt avows. "If we didn't have this, we wouldn't be able to offer programs to our clients."

Since 1998, the OE Marathon Training Program has raised over \$1 million.

Imerman Angels, like OE, also relies on the Chicago Marathon as its primary fundraising vehicle; the fundraising impact of Imerman's charity runners accounts for a third of the budget.

Imerman Angels, founded by Johnny Imerman, 34, is a Chicago-based charity that pairs cancer patients with cancer survivors who have overcome similar obstacles. On a typical day, the charity connects six patients with survivors to receive support and encouragement from someone who has battled and won the fight against their particular type of cancer.

Imerman's own battle with cancer - and his struggle to find his post-cancer identity - inspired the creation of Imerman Angels.

When Imerman began his cancer battle as a 26-year-old, he quickly noticed that while he had an endless supply of family and friends visiting him, many cancer patients fought the disease

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completely alone. Soon after witnessing this loneliness, Imerman began visiting with other cancer patients, inspiring them to keep fighting for their lives.

"I wondered," he remembers, "what if every cancer fighter could talk to a cancer survivor . . . the cancer survivor would be an angel - walking, living proof that the fighter could win, too . . . this is why I created the Imerman Angels."

This year, 115 athletes, many of whom are cancer survivors, will run as part of Imerman's charity team. As their feet press upon every mile, they will signal the raising of close to \$100,000 to continue their patient partnering program around the globe.

"It gives patients inspiration, hope and encouragement to beat it," Imerman says of his work. "I want people to believe in our mission and to believe in people."

The reach of the Bank of America Chicago Marathon extends beyond the inspiring experiences of participants, volunteers, charities and spectators - it stimulates the entire City of Chicago by creating a \$140 million economic impact - an impact that directly boosts the viability of Chicago's tourism industry.

Since its inception in 1977, 441,250 people have traveled 26.2 miles to leave their mark on the Chicago Marathon. The individual stories of these participants - and the spectators, volunteers and charities that cheer them on to the Grant Park finish line - animate the history and meaning of the Chicago Marathon, infusing it with an energy that impacts and enthuses the individual, the community, the economy, the charities, and the next generation of runners waiting to leave their own mark on the city streets.

