

Run spotlights prostate cancer

Proceeds from the Us Too! Father's Day event will pay for screenings and education.

BY TOM JEWELL
TRIBUNE-REVIEW

John Slatery completed the cancer awareness run Sunday, then grabbed extra bottles of water to hand off to family members as they crossed the finish line in front of Heinz Field.

All six of them — his mother, Winnie, his brother Dave, John's wife, Sharon, and their two daughters, Erin 11, and Kelly, 9 — ran or walked with a picture pinned on their backs of the late David Slatery, John and Dave's father.

A volunteer three years ago for the inaugural Us Too! Father's Day Prostate Cancer Awareness 5/10K Run, David Slatery died from prostate cancer last year at age 68.

"It's a little rough on Father's Day without him, but we'll be back here every year," said Slatery, 38, formerly of Penn Hills, now of Alexandria, Va.

More than 1,200 people — up from 885 last year — participated in the run yesterday that began and ended in front of Heinz Field. The Pittsburgh chapter of the Us Too! national prostate cancer support group will use proceeds to pay for screenings and education.

After the walk, former Pittsburgh Steelers linebacker and prostate cancer survivor Robin Cole, 49, of Nottingham, Washington County, pointed to the Heinz Field Jumbotron scoreboard as a way to demonstrate the need to heighten public awareness about the disease.

"We could use a billboard that size with information about prostate cancer because a lot of people just aren't aware," said Cole, whose father died of prostate cancer in 1976 at age 49.

Cole said that in his family, five of eight brothers have had or are under treatment for prostate cancer, with one scheduled for laser surgery next week.

"If it turns out that one of us doesn't have it, that would surprise me," Cole said.

Prostate cancer strikes one in six men and kills an average of 28,000 each year. The incidence of prostate cancer is nearly a third higher and mortality is twice as high among blacks compared to whites, according to the University of Maryland Medical Center.

While researchers can't explain why more blacks than whites get prostate cancer, they believe late detection contributes to the mortality rate. That's why Us Too! decided this year to team up with Clergy and Churches United, a group serving the Hill District.

"If it is detected and treated early, there's a 97 percent chance of survival," said Us Too!



PHOTOS: PHILIP G. PAVELY/TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Matt Danish, of Penn Hills, cruises to the finish line Sunday with his son, Christian, 5, during the Us Too! Father's Day Prostate Cancer Awareness 5/10K Run on the North Shore.

regional director Jerry Bortman, 68, of McMurray. "We can't prevent prostate cancer, but we can prevent people dying from it."

Race founder and director Jerry Livingston, 52, of Peters, twice has survived bouts with prostate cancer.

"We started this in 2002 when I had cancer, and I realized that we were running races for every other cause in Pittsburgh but our own," Livingston said. "So we claimed Father's Day and turned it into a family event."

Ray English, 70, of Nottingham, is another prostate cancer survivor who has gone on to other accomplishments, including a gold and two silver medals in running events at the Senior Olympics that wrapped up in the Pittsburgh region over the weekend.

"Four or five years ago, I had the cancer removed just after the Great Race in the fall, and I was back for the Pittsburgh Marathon in April," English said.

Kevin Lynch, 40, of Shadyside, and brother Mike Lynch, 44, of Fox Chapel, ran the race in honor of their father, Fran, 76, of Baldwin Borough, a prostate cancer survivor who is recovering from a knee replacement. The Lynch brothers were planning on stopping over for a visit after the race.

As they've done for the past three years, father Timothy John Powell, 39, of the North Side, and son Timothy Justin Powell, 17, of Meadville, ran the race together — sort of.

"We always do this run on Father's Day," the elder Powell said, "even though my son always beats me."



Dave Slatery (left) and family members wear photos of his late father, David, on their backs yesterday as they check race results. David Slatery died from prostate cancer last year at age 68.

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