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'Inspirational'

Ryan McLaughlin | IDS | 5/12/2008



More than 700 runners, walkers and cyclists gathered at Bill Armstrong Stadium on Saturday morning to show their support in fighting cancer at the first annual Coach Hep Indiana Cancer Challenge. The Challenge included a 5K run, 40K cycle, 100K cycle and 40K cycle/5K run event for those who wanted a more competitive experience. A 2K walk was also held for those who simply wanted to honor their loved ones.

The idea for the Coach Hep Cancer Challenge came about when local physician Rick Schilling decided he wanted to create an event to help fight cancer. Schilling, an avid bike rider, lost his father-in-law and a close family friend to cancer.

He began tossing around ideas for an event that would be in the same vein as the IU Dance Marathon and the IU Relay for Life. Schilling said he met with Jane Hoepfner, the wife of the late IU football coach Terry Hoepfner, in November 2006 and the two began sharing ideas.

"Jane's been great," he said. "The whole process has really been a great thing."

Schilling said there was a long process that goes into planning an event like the Challenge. First, they had to determine what kind of event they would put on. He said they ultimately wanted everyone to be able to come honor their loved ones and make a difference while participating in a fun event. With that, the idea to make the Coach Hep Challenge a mix of cycling, running and walking was born.

"We wanted to create an IU and Bloomington community family event destination," he said. "With this kind of event, you want to have something for everyone."

Schilling and the volunteer committee had to do a great deal of planning to put on a cycling, running and walking event. He said there are many issues involved in planning this kind of event including safety, making and marking the route, traffic control, obtaining city permits and posting signs and maps.

The event had more than 60 volunteers, designated by Challenge volunteer T-shirts, who helped register participants and ensure the event went smoothly. The IU Police Department also volunteered its services for the event.

At the conclusion of the 5K run, participants enjoyed a catered barbecue and live music from Illinois band Dan Hubbard and the Humadors.

"We wanted to make sure it was a fun event but also one that's inspirational," Schilling said.

By registering for the event, participants were able to set their own pledge amount for their fund-raising goal and were awarded with prizes for reaching various donation amounts. The money raised from the event will be donated to the IU Simon Cancer Center in Indianapolis and the Olcott Center for Cancer Education in Bloomington to help in cancer research and education, Schilling said.

Several members of IU Athletics were at the Challenge to show their support for Coach Hep and the fight against cancer. Many IU football players were in attendance wearing their jerseys in support. Most players talked to participants - one even played football with the younger children at the event. IU football coach Bill Lynch, Jane Hoepfner and IU basketball coach Tom Crean were also in attendance.

Eric Boger and John Henne made the trip from Indianapolis to participate in the Challenge. Boger and Henne, who are Kelley School of Business alumni, said they wanted to show their support for the cause.

"We support IU and support the coach," Henne said. "And it's a great reason to come back to Bloomington and enjoy a great day."

Schilling said because this was the inaugural year for the Coach Hep Cancer Challenge, the biggest goal was name recognition and getting people excited about the event.

"The goal was to present a professional, well put-on event," he said. "I think we did that. Overall, it was a great day."

Schilling wants to build on the success of this year's Challenge by making it an annual event. He said he plans on meeting with the committee within the next week to evaluate this year's event and begin goal setting and planning for next year's Challenge. Schilling said he would like to see more student participation in next year's event, which is scheduled for next May.

"A big goal for next year is to get more students involved in the event," he said. "So we are definitely making plans to market more towards students."

ENLARGE IMAGE



Jane Hoepfner reaches out to touch "The Rock" at Memorial Stadium during the 2K family walk at the first annual Coach Hep Indiana Cancer Challenge cycle/run/walk event Saturday morning. The event, established in memory of late IU football coach Terry Hoepfner, seeks to raise funds for the fight against cancer.
Pete Stuttgart •