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## Avery runs NY C Marathon to help daughter

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November 5, 2009

By **CAROLINE MURRAY**

When she trains for marathons, Lake Forest resident Martha Avery, 47, runs toward the cemetery on Lake Road while listening to an eclectic playlist. The music ranges from Motown to Black Eyed Peas songs, compliments of her children. While the music helps propel her, her primary motivation is that she is raising money for a personal cause.

On Sunday Avery ran the ING New York City Marathon for Molly, her 13-year-old daughter who suffers from Neurofibromatosis (NF). NF is a condition that develops when spontaneous genes mutate and tumors grow on nerve tissue, creating bone and skin abnormalities.

"[Molly's] daily struggles power me through training," Avery said. "Some of the side effects are muscle skill issues and coordination issues, so she's never going to be the best athlete. I'm never going to win a marathon, but I think seeing me so pleased, raising money for a good cause, it's a good thing for her."

The New York City race was the fourth marathon she has run to raise funds for the Children's Tumor Foundation, an NF awareness organization. She raised roughly \$6,000 for NF medical research this year, which far exceeded her goal of \$2,500.

A lawyer and mother of three, Avery is involved in her children's activities including the Lake Forest Soccer Association and the APT at Cherokee Elementary School and Deerpath Middle School.

### Small window

Training for a marathon, she said, is hard to do with kids. It's usually 8 a.m. when Avery knots her New Balance running shoes and heads out the door. Running is the only time she has all to herself, and sometimes she fits in children's activities around that.

"After the last marathon I ran in 2007, I didn't even have time to go home and shower, I just went right to one of their soccer games," she said, noting that was the Chicago marathon, which she has run six times, that was canceled due to extreme heat. She, however, made it to the finish line.

"For Martha, running is very therapeutic, her body craves it," said Peggy Kovach, Avery's friend. "As moms we give so much of ourselves to our kids and our families, it's really important for us to remember to take some time to ourselves, and running is what Martha does for herself."

### Hand in hand

Usually Avery's family comes out to support her. Kovach said that two of Avery's children found her at the end of the last marathon she ran, and crossed the finish line with her, hand in hand.

Sunday was the first time Avery ran without her husband and children cheering on the sidelines. However, a native New Yorker, Avery said she knew her relatives and old classmates from the area would help encourage her.

Marathon day started with Avery clad in a yellow NF team shirt, munching a power bar while riding the ferry to Staten Island with the rest of the group running to raise funds for NF research. This, she said, would be her last marathon, because her hamstrings just can't take the training anymore.

Avery admitted post marathon that the race through all five boroughs was tiring. As she hit mile 16 crossing the Queensboro Bridge into Manhattan, she knew she was going to make it to the end. She was encouraged by cheering families and colorful signs and said the crowds really differed from borough to borough.

"It was such a diversity of people watching you," she said. "In one section you run through the huge Hasidic Jewish area, but then at another point there's a choir from a gospel church, sitting on their steps, singing."

Leg cramps and nausea slowed her down at mile 24 as the race wound into Central Park, but quitting didn't cross her mind, she said. Five hours and three minutes after she started, Avery crossed the finish line.

"[Molly] keeps on pushing herself to do better, so I will keep on pushing myself to finish 26.2 miles," Avery said on her Web site. "The most important thing is that I raise funds for NF and New York is a great place to do it."

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