

SELECT A TOWN



Two life threatening diseases doesn't stop this Baldwin resident from running five marathons a year

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Richard Brodsky with his wife, Jodi, at a marathon they ran in Miami in 2016.

COURTESY RICHARD BRODSKY



By Ben Fiebert (<mailto:bfiebert@liherald.com>)

Within a span of five years, Richard Brodsky was diagnosed with two life-threatening illnesses, which inspired him to help others. Since 2014, he has been doing that with a 5K race for a special cause in Baldwin.

In 1997, Brodsky, of Atlantic Beach, was told he had HIV, and began taking AIDS medication, which he takes to this day. Then, in 2002, he was diagnosed with terminal brain cancer, but after undergoing months of treatment, he felt well enough to run the 2003 New York City Marathon. Brodsky, a one-time architect who's now 70, realized he was extremely fortunate for the medical care he received, and wanted to give back to those in poorer countries with weaker health care systems.

In 2004, he organized the World AIDS Marathon in Mbita, Kenya. The proceeds went to an AIDS orphanage there for children who had lost one or both parents to HIV or AIDS. Brodsky said that he always wanted to host a marathon in Africa, because that's where AIDS is most common, and he wanted to raise awareness of the disease.

Now, two decades since he ran his first marathon, Brodsky is still running. He enters five marathons a year, he said, and despite his illnesses and his age, he feels healthy. After doing some research, he said he is the only American he knows of with both HIV and brain cancer who runs marathons.

"The doctors didn't think I was going to survive for more than two or four years after I was diagnosed with terminal brain cancer in 2002," Brodsky said. "And 21 years later, I'm still running marathons."

He said that his drive to continue to run is fueled by the opportunity to help others.

Over the years, he estimates, he has helped save the lives of about 1,000 Kenyan orphans. He doesn't just send money there, he said; he gets involved on the ground.

“We go there, we get to take pictures, we dance with the orphans, and we feed them,” Brodsky said. “And it’s so rewarding.”

Brodsky used to be an architect, but gave it up after his doctor advised him to be less stressed. As his focus turned to helping others, he started the 5K AIDS and Cancer Run Walk.

“We’ve pretty much been going to Kenya every year to do marathons there,” he said. “And around 2008, people started to ask, ‘What are you doing to help people in America?’ So that’s when we decided to sponsor our first 5K AIDS and Cancer Run Walk,” in Baldwin.

This year’s event will take place in Baldwin Park on Sunday, and participants will make their way around the part twice.

Brodsky noted several organizations that are donating to the event — Hangout One Happy Place, the Five Towns Community Center, Harmony Healthcare Long Island, Northwell Health, Options for Community Living, Gino’s Pizza in Baldwin, and the 2162 Grand Ave. Commissar Foundation.

Just like the marathons in Kenya, all of the proceeds will go to organizations that help patients with AIDS or cancer, including the Long Island Minority AIDS Coalition and North Shore University Hospital, which are on a long list of organizations that can be viewed at RichardMBrodsky.Org.

Gala Fresh Supermarket will give \$20 gift certificates to 30 Baldwin families who bring a child.

“We have a lot of really good food at the 5K,” Brodsky said. “We have Starbucks, coffee, muffins, and bagels.”

As of press time on Monday, 120 runners and walkers had registered to take part.

There will also be two people participating virtually, in Wyoming and Germany. Brodsky expected at least 200 to register by race day.

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