

Patrick McGlade: Road Warrior

Twenty-one-year-old ultra-marathoner Patrick McGlade runs across America to raise awareness about juvenile arthritis and funds for the Arthritis Foundation.

By Judy Alexandra DiEdwardo



UPDATE: Patrick completed his run across the country on April 23. Read more about his journey and what he's doing to raise awareness and funds for juvenile arthritis on his web site.

Patrick McGlade is no Forrest Gump. But don't tell his thousands of followers from California to Georgia who have opened their hearts, homes and pocketbooks to support and encourage the Richmond, Va. native.

To them, he's every bit the humble messiah who is delivering more than a message about juvenile arthritis (JA), a debilitating disease that affects 300,000 children and young adults nationwide. He is hoping to raise \$50,000 for the Arthritis Foundation to help find a cure by running the equivalent of a marathon a day for four months, from January to April 2010.

"It's a cause that desperately needs exposure," stresses Patrick, who was stunned by the prevalence of JA after hearing about the plight of a friend's 11-year-old granddaughter.

"So few people know about JA, or think arthritis affects only older people. When I heard what this little girl was enduring, all the injections and hospital stays, I knew I *had* to do something. So, I am running for kids who can't."

An enthusiastic crowd of friends, family and supporters joined Patrick in Huntington Beach, Calif. on January 2, 2010 to launch his cross-country run, which will end at Tybee Island, Georgia on April 23.

But, one face stood out from the rest: Arthritis Foundation advocate, 11-year-old Mikayla Minnig, of Downey, Calif., who has JA, presented him with a bracelet etched with the words, 'Kids Get Arthritis Too.' "I was so touched," says Patrick. "It will be with me every step of the way. I may *never* take it off."

Patrick realized his love of running while running to get cars as a valet near his Virginia home and found he was suited for running long distances. He qualified for Boston's Marine Corps Marathon and quickly graduated to running ultra-marathons, which cover distances of up to 100 miles. Since then, he has won a slew of races.

Patrick began planning his route in May for the 2,500-mile course from California to Georgia, and was ready by the time he graduated with a business degree from Virginia Commonwealth University in December.

He is recording his journey using an arsenal of high-tech networking tools, from Google maps to daily video blogs posted via his iPhone.

Daily lodging is courtesy of a host family network from different chapters of the Arthritis Foundation who offer Patrick their homes or cash for a hotel room.

One such family is Mike and Bettye Forster of Louisville, Miss., whose 10-year-old granddaughter, Rebecca, has been battling JA since age 5.

"I'm not going to lie. It's been tough," says Rebecca's father, Dennis Kuo of Little Rock, Ark., who remembers the day he saw Rebecca limping, her knees swollen. "Rebecca looks and acts like any normal child. But, at home she's getting shots and pills. "The uncertainty of what's ahead is frightening."

Kuo, a pediatrician, applauds Patrick's efforts bringing attention to JA. "It's frustrating because there isn't a test for JA. As a result, many children don't get diagnosed early and live in pain. Too, I have found that treatments can vary from doctor to doctor, which adds to the frustration and confusion."

It's a reality that Patrick is reminded of when he sees the bracelet on his wrist.

"I've had time to think some pretty big truths out here," says Patrick. "Too many young people with arthritis will never know what it's like to run. I want to help find a cure and encourage kids to live a physically fit life. If kids can stay active they are more inclined to stay curious, which is what life is about."

What's next for Patrick? "Finding a job, ideally in something that involves running or marketing or both. That would be awesome."

Road Trip: What's in the Bag?

For his ambitious 2,500-mile trek, Patrick packed a baby jogging stroller with everything from clothes to Band-Aids.

- Two-man Eureka tent
- Clothes (three pairs running shorts, two short sleeve shirts, one long sleeve shirt, two sets of SmartWool base layers, five pairs of SmartWool socks, rain pants and jacket)
- Sleeping bag
- Extra pair of size 11½ or 12 ASICS running shoes (uses one pair for every 500 miles. Has new ones shipped along his route. Alternates with size 12s to prevent blisters when feet swell.)
- GU Energy Nutritional Gel Packs (donated by GU)
- Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches (Patrick stops at markets along his route every two days and prepares a dozen sandwiches at a time since he eats up to eight a day to help meet his daily 7,000-calorie intake)
- Water (48-ounce Camelback pouch and 16-ounce water bottle)
- Sunscreen
- Toiletries (toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, shampoo)
- First aid kit (Band-Aids, Neosporin)
- Tire repair kit for the baby jogger

Patrick's Favorite iPhone Apps

- Google Maps: "Indispensable."
- Around Me: "No time to look for a post office or supermarket. It's perfect."
- Weather: "Nice to see what's in store weather-wise."
- Text Message: "My chief means of keeping in touch."
- Blog Press: "A blogger's must-have."
- Tilt Shift Gen: "Photo editing app is perfect for images I take for my Web site."