

NATIONWIDE
CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL
COLUMBUS
MARATHON

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL COLUMBUS MARATHON &
½ MARATHON TO FEATURE RECIPIENTS OF LASHUTKA SPIRIT AWARD**

10th Annual Award highlights individuals with bravery and perseverance

(COLUMBUS, OH) — [The 39th Annual Nationwide Children's Hospital Columbus Marathon & ½ Marathon](#), to be held on Sunday, Oct. 21, will spotlight runners and walkers out of a field of 18,000 who have overcome enormous obstacles and have inspired many to train for and participate in the marathon or ½ marathon. The program, named to honor former Columbus Mayor Greg Lashutka, who helped launch the Columbus Marathon in 1980, honors 10 people each year.

The winners will be recognized at the start line for their accomplishments.

Kimberlee Birney, Miamisburg, Ohio-- In June of 2015, after an otherwise uneventful first pregnancy, Kimberlee and her husband lost their daughter Abigail at just three days old after complications surrounding her birth. Having many unanswered questions, Kimberlee and her husband have dedicated their efforts to supporting Nationwide Children's Hospital because of the care they received during that difficult time. Kimberlee and her family have adopted the mantra to Live Life for Abigail, to remind everyone to get out in the world and experience all the beautiful things that Abigail could not. Kimberlee will run her first half marathon while also raising money for Nationwide Children's Hospital as a Children's Champion.

AJ Cericola, Columbus, Ohio—AJ and his wife lost their daughter, Annelise, three days after her birth due to a congenital diaphragmatic hernia and premature birth. AJ, whose wife describes him as her “unshakeable rock of support,” began exercising to process his grief. He is running his second Nationwide Children's Hospital ½ marathon this year with his wife and baby daughter (born in August) cheering him at the Angel Mile.

Tony and Annie Damceski, Lewis Center--- Tony and Annie are running the full marathon in honor of their daughter, Mila Elaine, who passed away in March after a short, seven-day stay at Nationwide Children's Cardiothoracic NICU. In memory of their daughter and appreciation of Nationwide Children's Hospital, they are one of the top fundraising teams this year.

Tina Deerman, Grove City, Ohio—As a young widow looking for an activity to do with her children, Tina began running in 2014. In 2017, while running in the Nationwide Children's Columbus Marathon & ½ Marathon, Tina suffered an injury to her ankle. An anti-inflammatory drug prescribed by her doctor for her ankle made her sick to her stomach. Further testing revealed that Tina had colon cancer and required surgery. She didn't let this diagnosis keep her from training for and running the Flying Pig Four Way with Extra Cheese almost six months to the day after the surgery. Tina is planning to participate in 14 other races at the one-year mark, including the Columbus Marathon.

Patrick McKennedy, Westerville, Ohio--In 1989, Patrick suffered a stroke during his Junior year of high school that affected the right side of his body. He was able to walk with a cane, eventually weaning himself off and started running in 2008. He ran his first marathon in 2011. In 2013, Patrick suffered another stroke, again impacting the right side of his body. Once again, Patrick committed himself to running and the Nationwide Children's Hospital Columbus Marathon & ½ Marathon will be his fifth marathon since his last stroke. He hopes to show others in the stroke community not to allow a stroke to control what you can or can't do.

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Molly Mandel, Columbus, Ohio---Molly is running to honor her sister Amy Wickes who took her life in March 2017 and to bring awareness to the need for mental health support for many in our country. After losing her sister to such a tragedy, Molly used running and exercise to help herself stand back up, get stronger mentally and physically, and to help others like her sister. Molly is raising money for the Alvis House while showing others what it means to rebuild and never give up.

Elizabeth Palmer, Perrysburg, Ohio – Elizabeth has suffered with Type 1 diabetes since she was 13 years old. She is now 21 and is a nursing student at Ashland University and hopes to work at Nationwide Children's when she graduates. Type 1 diabetes has never slowed her down and Elizabeth will run her first ½ marathon this year.

Sarah Smith, Columbus, Ohio— Sarah is running the full marathon after being diagnosed with and receiving treatment for Stage IV Metastatic Breast Cancer. Inspired by a high school classmate's openness and positivity during her own cancer battle, Sarah decided to take the same approach and let her feet do the talking. She has many marathons to her name, but every finish line is extra special now. "In completing the Columbus Marathon while undergoing cancer treatment, my hope is to encourage others to keep doing the things that bring them joy, regardless of their circumstances."

Allie Wening, Toledo, Ohio-- Allie was born amidst severe birthing complications, and upon delivery it was presumed she would have trouble walking for the entirety of her life. While her physical capabilities now far surpass that, she does have less lower muscle tone and she has a slight tremor that extends to her hands and fingers. Growing up, she always wanted to be a "runner", but feared her slight physical limitations precluded her from ever being that. Now, while she is extraordinarily busy, and focused on working her way through her third year of medical school, she has decided to give time to training and preparing for her first ever race, the Nationwide Children's Hospital Columbus ½ Marathon.

Michelle Worrellia, Dublin, Ohio -- Michelle walks and fundraises in honor of her niece with SMA (Spinal Muscular Atrophy). She is a long-time fundraiser and supporter of NCH and the marathon. She is raising money and funds for SMA Research for the Dr. Kathrin Meyer Lab at the Research Institute at NCH with continued teamwork with the Burghes Lab for SMA at The Ohio State University. Thanks to Nationwide Children's Hospital, her niece has received a new treatment for SMA and Michelle runs to supports its efforts to find more treatment options for those who suffer.

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About The Nationwide Children's Hospital Columbus Marathon & ½ Marathon

The Nationwide Children's Hospital Columbus Marathon & ½ Marathon will be held on Sunday, Oct. 21, 2018. and will feature up to 18,000 athletes. The Marathon, now in its 39th year, is one of the largest marathon in Ohio and one of the top 20 in the United States. Approximately \$7 million has been raised for Nationwide Children's Hospital since it became the title beneficiary of the event in 2012. For more information, visit www.columbusmarathon.com.

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About Nationwide Children's Hospital

Nationwide Children's Hospital is honored to serve as the title beneficiary of the [Nationwide Children's Hospital Columbus Marathon & 1/2 Marathon](http://www.nationwidechildrens.org/marathon). "Patient Champions" will represent 24 of the 26.2 miles on this year's course. The other two miles along the Marathon route will be deemed the "Encore Mile" (Patient Champions from 2012 through 2016) and "Angel Mile" (dedicated to the angels of Nationwide Children's who have passed on). The Patient Champions and their families will cheer on participants and serve as a visual reminder of how the marathon is helping ill and injured children. Children's Champions are participants, who chose to run, walk or cheer for the marathon or ½ marathon while fundraising for Nationwide Children's Hospital. As a Children's Champion, these hundreds of individuals are reaching beyond personal training goals to support another mission. To cure, to mend, and comfort each child that walks through the doors of Nationwide Children's. Their fundraising efforts help provide every child with the highest quality of care, regardless of the child's diagnosis or the family's ability to pay. There's still time to become a Children's Champion. To learn more about the Patient Champions or fundraising efforts visit nationwidechildrens.org/marathon.

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