

To the 2020 Boston Marathon Team:

First off, I'm so sorry that your race day is delayed. This virus has put a monkey wrench into everyone's plans. As a former participant of the RMH team in 2017, I know how much hard work you've put into getting yourself to race day. I know you've spent hours training, most likely running through sore muscles, blisters, cold weather, and fatigue. If this is your 1st marathon like it was for me, you have pushed your body to limits you most likely never thought you would or could achieve. You've built up to that 22 mile long run, and I'm sure you thought at the completion I'm ready. I know all of you have worked extremely hard to ask everyone you know for a few bucks to help you get to your fundraising goal. I've been there, and I know just how hard it is.

Let me tell you a little bit about me. In 2015 my daughter who at the time was 7 years old, had been diagnosed with a benign brain tumor. We live in NY and after her surgery we were directed up to MGH where Ava would undergo 6 weeks of outpatient Proton Beam Therapy radiation. We were fortunate enough to stay at the Ronald McDonald House during those 6 weeks. I'm sure you've heard how this organization helps families like mine. They gave us a very comfortable place to stay, provided us with support for the family, activities for the kids, social outlets to hang out with other families who were dealing with something similar. To put it mildly they were a God sent for us. Despite the reasons we were in Boston to begin with the House made our stay bearable and dare I say Enjoyable.

When we arrived in Boston in 2015 I was not a runner at all. To relieve my own stress and anxiety of where I was in life, I started running while we were staying there. I would go out after the kids went to sleep and run/walk for 45 minutes. The harbor walk was beautiful and those 45 minutes offered me some alone time to clearly think. I was not a runner and I couldn't run for more than 2 minutes before I would have to stop and walk. I would run for 2 minutes and then walk for 2 minutes. The time to myself encouraged me to keep going and by the time we were getting ready to leave Boston I was running 4 to 5 miles without stopping. My marathon journey was starting but I didn't know it yet.

We left Boston in October 2015 and oddly enough my best friend from college had qualified to run the Boston Marathon in 2016. I had promised him that I would attend the race long before I knew my daughter had a tumor or before we had decided to get her treatments in Boston. My family and I went up to the Marathon in April of 2016 and we found our-selves as spectators to a race that at the time I had no idea the magnitude of. I reached out to the director of the program before we arrived and got the bib numbers of the runners who were running the marathon in 2016. After my buddy passed us I started looking for the RMBH runners and taking notice of the thousands of charity runners. I was beyond inspired by all of them, some were carrying signs, or had things written on their arms or bib. The runners also had on a singlet so you knew who they were running for. We left the race that day and I told my wife on T as we went back to the hotel, "I'm going to run this race next year". My journey had



begun. I was still running 6 months after we had left Boston and I was getting better and was able to run longer. I was no longer run/walk and I was consistently running 5 or 6 miles a day but that would change.

I started training and said I've got to run a half 1st so that whole summer I run and trained and I signed up for the 2016 Boston Half Marathon. This would be my 1st organized race that I would ever run. One of the perks as an alumni of RMBH is, if we're ever back in Boston for medical treatment or appointments we could ask if they have room for us to stay. I reached out to the director of RMBH in September and the director asked if I would be interested in running the full in April of 2017. I needed no convincing and I filled out the application 20 minutes after I had received it.

Why do I tell you this? Running that race was one of the best things I've ever done in my life. The memory of that day will stick with me forever. Here was an out of shape, over weight 38 year old who had no business running a race that is reserved for the best of the best marathon runners. I was inspired by those who I saw as a spectator and I know that along the way from Hopkinton to Boylston Street I inspired others who saw me. I dropped about 30 pounds, dedicated myself to become a runner and I haven't stopped. We as a family have gone back to Boston and been spectators at the 2018 and 2019 marathons and we hope to be there in September to cheer you on. I promise you that your training and dedication to this point is not in vein. Even though the race has been re-scheduled you must stay focused on your goal, enjoy the journey, and don't stop running. I'll leave you with this picture of me when I crossed the Finish Line in 2017. This picture is an important piece of my life. The look on my face says it all, this is pure exhilaration, accomplishment, grit, perseverance and dedication. If you want it bad enough nothing will stand in your way. Go get it and don't forget the reason that you are doing it.

- Darren