

10K runners raise funds, awareness for Danny Did

BY BOBBY J. SMITH

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An Oxford couple brought another objective into their participation in the Corinth Coca-Cola Classic 10K — saving lives.

Misty and Stephen Phillips ran Mississippi's second largest footrace to raise awareness for the Danny Did Foundation, a non-profit corporation dedicated to the mission of preventing deaths caused by epileptic seizures.

Their dedication to the cause began when Misty's 14-year old son, Lucas Yates, began experiencing seizures about two years ago. On Christmas Eve, 2009, Misty and Stephen woke to a loud noise and found Lucas on the bathroom floor in the middle of a seizure. Since then they've moved forward with different treatment options, all the while learning to live with Lucas' condition and learning as

much as possible to better care for him.

Faced with a lack of comprehensive information about treatment options from Lucas' doctors, Misty and Stephen have turned to other organization — including Danny Did — to learn more about caring for Lucas and helping others in similar situations.

"The foundation has helped people in 35 states. We want it to help people in all 50 states," said Misty.

One of the main challenges faced by a parent of a child suffering from seizures is the lack of discussion of alternate treatment methods by doctors. Misty said her son's doctors would just prescribe Lucas an anti-seizure medication and made no mention of how the seizures were life-threatening. The doc-

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tors never recommended the emerging technology and life-saving devices such as seizure monitors for kids to wear while sleeping. (If the child has a seizure, the monitor will send a text message to the parent or caregiver's phone.) A frustrating, often deadly, silence characterized their interactions with Lucas' doctors.

"It's almost like the doctors are scared to tell you it's life-threatening," said Stephen.

To raise awareness of Danny Did and the options available for parents of epileptic children, Misty and Stephen are training to run in the Boston Marathon. Misty is a long-time runner. Stephen — who hadn't done much running since P.E. class in school — began training in January, shortly after kicking a 20-year two-pack-a-day smoking habit.

Corinth was their third footrace of the year. Misty, 36, crossed the finish line in 49 minutes and 49 seconds. Stephen, 37, finished in one hour and 44 seconds.

While Lucas is currently faring better, Misty and Stephen say they will keep on running the good race to raise awareness for a program that could save an untold number of lives.

"These kids are warriors," said Misty. "They're worth standing up for."

The main goals of the Danny Did Foundation are to advance awareness of epilepsy and Sudden Unexpected Death in Epilepsy (SUDEP), and to enhance communication about SUDEP between medical professionals and those affected by seizures. It also works to spread the word about seizure detection and seizure prediction devices and other technologies that may as-

sist in preventing deaths caused by seizures.

Epilepsy impacts almost 3 million people in America and roughly 50 million people worldwide. An estimated 50,000 deaths occur annually in the U.S. from prolonged seizures, SUDEP and other seizure-related causes such as drowning and accidents.

The Danny Did Foundation is named after Danny Stanton, the son of Chicagoans Mike and Mariann Stanton. SUDEP ended Danny's life at age four. Since then, the Stantons have made it their mission to prevent deaths caused by seizures. The name of the organization is taken from the closing sentences of Danny's obituary: "Please go and enjoy your life. Danny did."

For more information or to make a tax-deductible donation to the Danny Did Foundation visit www.dannydid.org.



Misty and Stephen Phillips ran the Corinth Coca-Cola Classic 10K to raise awareness for the Danny Did Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to preventing deaths caused by epileptic seizures. The Oxford couple is training for the Chicago Marathon.

Staff photo by Bobby J. Smith