

Shared Marathon Goal Pays Benefits Far And Wide

BY RITA GORE - FOR THE CALGARY HERALD - JANUARY 7, 2010

Last January, Calgarian Heather Webber invited friends and family to train with her for the Honolulu Marathon. Just a few weeks later, Webber was diagnosed, for the third time, with cancer.

"By March, 2009. I knew I was sick again, but thought, 'Well, I can still walk, so let's go forward'," says Webber, 46, who is married with three daughters,

I was one of the friends who accepted her challenge, becoming part of the 45-to-68-year-old 'Honolulu Hopefuls'. What impressed Webber was how people got involved for her at first but turned the marathon into their own personal journey, in the end.

"Initially, I just did it for the walks, to get stronger, to get healthy," says Debbie Hopkins. When she first told her family, "They looked at me like I was pretty much nuts; there was no belief there whatsoever. Then they saw me doing the weekly walks and they got pretty pumped and, now, they believe I can do it."

As our little group developed, trained, and strengthened, we watched Webber face a different kind of challenge. Not once did she say "Why me?", in the face of being dealt a terminal diagnosis.

Instead, she sees parallels between taking on a marathon and taking on cancer. "To me this has become like a marathon of life; it's about courage, strength, and determination. Walking a marathon requires those same things."

Due to her illness, Webber was unable to walk the Honolulu Marathon herself but, on Dec. 13, she was there to witness all twenty 'Hopefuls' successfully complete it.