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Tri-City Medical Center welcomes 13 lucky North County residents into its free Lucky 13 marathon training program

OCEANSIDE, Calif; – Thirteen deserving participants have been chosen to be a part of the annual Lucky 13, a free hospital-sponsored training program for the Tri-City Medical Center Carlsbad Marathon and Half Marathon on January 15, 2017. The training program begins in July and will prepare the participants to safely walk or run in their first-ever half or full marathon.

Each runner brings along their own personal story of conquering adversity and is overcoming illnesses from herniated discs to lupus to late-stage and even terminal cancers.

Ranging in age from 24 to 68, the Lucky 13 will receive specialized training led by coaches from Tri-City Wellness Center and In Motion Fit, a six-month membership to the wellness center in Carlsbad, and a personal health assessment in addition to weekly group training.

“We always have a great pool of applicants to choose from, but this year, we had some really incredible stories,” says program coordinator Paul Carey, who started as a Lucky 13 participant back in 2010 and was inspired by his experience to get his kinesiology degree from Cal State San Marcos before joining the wellness center as a personal trainer. “It’s inspiring to witness these journeys firsthand. Running a half marathon is a feat that not everyone can say they’ve done, especially not at 67 years old or after beating a cancer diagnosis. There is no greater pleasure than helping these more than deserving runners accomplish their health and fitness goals.”



The 13 participants come from a diverse set of backgrounds with a variety of conditions.

Melanie Kabo, 40, of Carlsbad is set on living her life to the fullest. Four years ago, Kabo was diagnosed with brain cancer and given only three to eight years to live. Now checking items off her bucket-list, completing the Carlsbad half marathon and then the full Half Marathon Triple Crown series would check off four items.

Nicole, 30, of San Diego was diagnosed with terminal brain cancer five and a half years ago and was given just six years to live. Nicole is now fighting with all she can and is keeping a positive outlook on life. "Brain cancer is rough, especially knowing there's no cure and most people don't live very long once diagnosed. That's terrifying! But to think that I'm getting the training to run a half marathon--this will be life changing!" Nicole is grabbing life by the horns and ready to inspire others with cancer to stay positive.

Crystal Goodwater, 35, of Escondido found herself addicted to powerful pain medications after battling severe depression and a serious back injury from a car accident. While in rehab, Goodwater was finally diagnosed with bi-polar disorder. Not wanting to go back on pain medications, she was then led down a path to health and recovery through physical exercise. She hopes to be a role model for those dealing with addiction and mental illness.

David Tweedy, 57, of Carlsbad is the chairman of the Tri-City Hospital Foundation. This community leader had always considered himself an athlete; however, after losing the motivation to workout due to work stressors and pressure, his weight and blood pressure increased significantly and he found himself taking numerous daily medications. Now 40 pounds overweight, he looked at the Lucky 13 as a great opportunity to restore his physical fitness and wean himself from medications through a healthier lifestyle. Tweedy hopes to be an example to others suffering from high blood pressure and vulnerable to stroke and heart attack.

Gregory Warda, 68, of Carlsbad is the oldest Lucky 13 participant. He suffered from colon cancer at 50 and has since had multiple level herniated discs that precluded walking and standing. After a robotic spine surgery with Dr. Payam Moazzaz of Tri-City Medical Center, Warda has regained the ability to exercise and is ready for the discipline that the Lucky 13 will provide him.

Jennifer Crawford, 32, of Carlsbad has been struggling with an auto-immune disease, undifferentiated connective tissue disease or UCTD, since 2010. She became very ill and suffered from severe pain in her joints and connective tissue, gastrointestinal problems, chronic sinus, rashes -- even her hair started falling out. Once she learned to control the flares for UCTD, she was determined to get back to the healthy lifestyle she enjoyed before her diagnosis. She has always dreamed of running a half-marathon and is excited to work with a team towards accomplishing this goal.

Katharine Salas, 35, of Vista was diagnosed with systematic lupus at 28. Today, she manages her disease with medication, stress management, sleep and exercise. "I want to share my story and spread awareness about living with a chronic illness and thriving with it. I want to push past my boundaries and stay there. I want this year to be life changing for good despite the ups and downs of my disease. I look forward to crossing the finish line with the biggest smile on my face and fullness in my heart."

Stage 4 esophageal cancer with 19 metastases to the abdomen, lungs and cervical spine could not stop Keith Steussi, 50, of Carlsbad. In 2013 he was given this diagnosis and one year to live. He was unable to eat during chemo and dropped 100 pounds, but six weeks of chemo later Steussi was given an essentially normal PET scan. His radiologist and oncologist were shocked by his recovery. After eight months of chemo and rehab, Steussi had virtually no trace of cancer and regained his mobility. The side effects of chemo, however, had taken effect, and he was forced to retire from a 23-year career with the military. Now Steussi is looking to get back into shape and is grateful and excited to be training under Coach Carey.

Kristina King, 24, of Solana Beach loves to stay active, eat well and is like every other woman her age – except for the fact that King has a glass eye. At two years old King was diagnosed with retinoblastoma, a cancer that starts in the retina, and had a lifesaving surgery that unfortunately meant the removal of one of her eyes. Ever the athlete, King beat the odds and participated in sports like gymnastics, horseback riding and others. Though she still experiences self-doubt because of her eye, she is looking forward to pushing herself and having a great time in her first half-marathon ever.

At 43, Kristina Wilson of Carlsbad had led a healthy life for as long as she could remember. In 2009, she developed a lingering cough from a common cold that turned into idiopathic cardiomyopathy. “I think the hardest part to overcome was the look in my son’s eyes when he finally got to visit me in the ICU. He was only four at the time. Kids are supposed to think their parents are invincible, will always be there, can fix anything, and protect them no matter what. Kids shouldn’t learn the truth that some things are beyond their parents’ control until they are much older.” Now healing well, Wilson still has trouble exercising but wants to become a healthier, stronger person and enjoy more activities and time with her family.

Arthritis has set in for Luanne Minette, 67, of Oceanside. After visiting several orthopedic foot specialists, Minette had joint replacements in both her feet in 2012. Since her surgery, Minette has learned to push past the pain she still feels and enjoys dancing, walking on the beach and playing with her grandchildren. After seeing an ad for the Lucky 13, Minette knew she would regret not trying it. She has a spirit that never gives up and is ready to commit 100 percent to the Lucky 13.

Robin Ike, 50, of Vista, has been struggling with weight gain after having problems with her knee last year and depression stemming from recent personal setbacks. Through the Lucky 13, Ike is ready to reach her weight goals, triple crown goals and overall wellbeing during this challenging time in her life.

Sandra Henika, 56, of Vista had to relearn how to walk after a brain surgery in 2009. Despite all of her treatment and progress, Henika then had to have a pituitary tumor removed in 2013 and radioactive iodine treatments for a recurring cancer in her lungs, both of which were performed at Tri-City Medical Center. Now healthy, Henika sees her Lucky 13 training as a way to express her gratitude towards the doctors and therapists with whom she continues to work with at Tri-City.

For more information on the Lucky 13 and to follow their progress, visit www.tricitymed.org/lucky13.

About Tri-City Medical Center

Tri-City Medical Center has served its community for over 50 years and is a 397 bed full service, acute-care hospital in Oceanside, Calif. with a primary care clinic and over 700 physicians practicing in 60 specialties. Its Gold Seal of Approval® from the Joint Commission recognizes its commitment to safe and effective patient care for the residents of the community it serves. It operates the only Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) in North County as well as an Orthopedic & Spine Institute, a Cardiovascular Health Institute and a Neuroscience Institute along with the Tri-City Wellness Center in Carlsbad, Calif., recognized as one of the best wellness centers in San Diego County. It also specializes in women’s health, robotic surgery, cancer and emergency care. Tri-City Medical Center has received its sixth consecutive “A” rating from the national hospital safety scoring organization, The Leapfrog Group.

For more information about Tri-City Medical Center and Tri-City Healthcare District, please visit www.tricitymed.org.

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