Dad approaches 50 by taking on 50 runs for Francis House Children's Hospice charity

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Approaching fifty years of age can be a daunting prospect for some, but Martyn Cassidy sees it as an opportunity to improve his fitness and support a worthy cause by running fifty races in a single year before his fiftieth birthday.

Quantity surveyor Martyn, from Sale in Greater Manchester, admits to being a bit of a fast-food fan and wanted to mark the occasion by setting himself a challenge. His previous efforts were limited to the occasional event despite being a runner for more than 18 years.

The yearlong plan includes tackling a mixture of road and trail runs covering a range of distances between 5k and Half Marathon, with a total distance of approximately 420km.

Martyn is now up to 15 races after he completed the half marathon at Capesthorne Hall over the weekend.

Whilst searching around for an appropriate cause to support, Martyn's eldest daughter Rebecca, a student at Ashton on Mersey High School, told him about a talk by staff from Francis House Children's Hospice and their work supporting the families of children and young people with life-limiting conditions.

The charity that has been in existence since 1990, and is well known in the Greater Manchester area, seemed like the perfect fit for Martyn as it continues to develop its services supporting local families and relies on charitable donations for much of its income.

Martyn began his quest the day after his 49th birthday (June 29) with a 5km run around Media City UK.

He said: "This challenge has given me a chance to break the cycle of 18 years of entering one event, training for it but then slobbing about for the rest of the year and generally being unhealthy.

"I want to see what I'm capable of if I push myself just a little bit more. The results already have been noticeable. After just a few weeks I'm feeling fitter and healthier, and the races give me something exciting to look forward to each weekend. I've already set two new personal bests."

Martyn, has chosen events that are local to the northwest, but his race itinerary also includes travelling to Wales, Birmingham and even Alton Towers. Wife Sara has joined him on a number of runs along with other family members and friends.

"My fantastic supportive family gifted me a medal rack for my 49th birthday which is already straining from the weight of all the shiny objects hanging from it as it sits proudly on the kitchen wall.

"Of course, I didn't embark on this journey just to get medals and fast times. I wanted to raise funds in the process and thanks to generous friends, colleagues, and family I've already smashed my target of £500 with more than £900 in donations."

Julie Williams, fundraising officer of Francis House said: "It's thanks to people like Martyn that we can continue to give families a break from their role as carers, and the children and young people some independence and fun experiences - whether it's in their own home or at the hospice.

"It's lovely that Martyn has chosen to support Francis House after hearing about us at Rebecca's school assembly. We wish him luck with the challenge and future races."

To follow Martyn's progress visit his JustGiving page https://www.justgiving.com/page/martyn-cassidy-1679919080139

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