Martyn’s mission to complete 50 runs for charity before his 50th birthday and the Great Manchester Run is event number 46

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Martyn Cassidy, a man who is on a mission to complete 50 organised running events in a year to raise funds for Francis House Children’s Hospice, has selected the Great Manchester Run as event number 46.

With his 50th birthday approaching on June 28, Martyn will be donning his bright yellow running vest as he crosses the finish line, running in support of the beloved Manchester children’s hospice.

Martyn, who is a quantity surveyor, wanted to mark the occasion of turning 50 years of age by getting fit and breaking a twenty year cycle of running just one event a year.

His weekly challenges have taken him on a tour of the north west of England - running a combination of 5k Parkruns, 10k runs, Half Marathons and part of a Marathon relay team.

Martyn, from Sale, first took part in the Great Manchester Run in 2005 - his first ever running event after friends dared him, and his now wife Sara, to take part. For the next twelve years he entered the annual event.

> Martyn said: “That’s really when my running started at the Great Manchester Run. I loved running the route and it’s a great event for a first timer as the crowds and atmosphere pulls you along. There is a really good vibe in the town afterwards with all of the runners and their families and friends.”

Over the course of his ‘50 for 50’ challenge, Martyn will have clocked up approximately 500km in races and a further 500km in training runs between the events.

Martyn is hoping to raise £2,000 and is well on the way of achieving his target having raised more than £1,800.

Events include the Wilmslow 10k, Birkenhead Parkrun, Tatton half marathon, Alton Towers 10k, Liverpool half marathon and the Trafford 10k.

> “Wilmslow Summer 10k was a bit of a special one as I somehow managed to knock over half a minute off my 10k Personal Best (PB). I was accompanied, for the first of more than 22 occasions, by my inspirational better half Sara who also achieved a PB.
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> “On the way back to the car a lady approached us and thanked us for running for Francis House as her child had been there. It certainly put things in perspective," said Martyn.

Francis House Children’s Hospice supports more than 600 families from across Greater Manchester, providing a range of services including respite care, homecare, sibling support, end of life care and bereavement support to children and young adults with life-limiting and life-threatening conditions.

Annual running costs are £4.8 million, approximately £13,150 per day, and all services are given completely free. By far the largest part of funding comes through charitable donations.

> Martyn said: “I was already aware of the brilliant work that Francis House does. It just felt like the right choice. I went to an open day to the hospice and it inspired me a lot. The next day I was running a very muddy and hilly Delamere Forest Trail 10k and it really pushed me to keep going.”
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> “I’m addicted to running now. I’ve obliterated all of my PB’s at every distance. I’ve made new friendships in the local running community, just by meeting up at the events you get chatting. I’ve also met people where I live which is nice. I'd like to think I’ve also inspired a couple of my friends to join in as well. A guy at work did his first ever Parkrun with me.
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> “Before this challenge running was something that I dabbled with. I wasn’t serious with it and used to find it a bit of a chore to be honest. But now, if I don’t run, I don’t feel right.

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> “I’ve been running a 10k every year for the last 18 years and now aged 49 years I’m running two and a half minutes faster than I ever have before.”

Anyone wanting to take part in the Great Manchester Run 10k or Half Marathon on May 26 and run in support of Francis House can sign up for a discounted place. Subject to availability. To find out more and to register visit www.francishouse.org.uk/great-manchester-run

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