

# Miles for Myeloma 5K Raises Nearly \$100,000 for the IMF

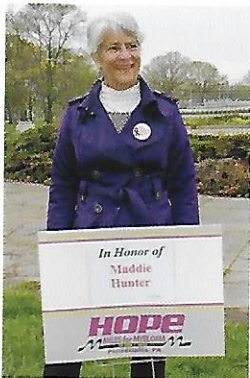
By Suzanne Battaglia  
IMF Director, Member Events

From an initial meeting around a kitchen table, Marilyn Alexander and her twin sister, Sharon, along with Phil Falkowitz and his wife Barbara, launched the Philadelphia Multiple Myeloma Networking Group. Through trial and error, the PMMNG has become a great resource of support and education for the local myeloma community.



Co-founders of the Philadelphia Multiple Myeloma Networking Group, Phil and Barbara Falkowitz

Over the years, many PMMNG members have attended the IMF's annual Support Group Leaders Summit, and group facilitator Maddie Hunter credits the IMF's stewardship for helping the leaders of their group to become trained to address issues faced by the members.



Maddie Hunter at the most recent Miles for Myeloma race

The IMF's support of the PMMNG was one of the reasons that the group's 2017 Miles for Myeloma 5K Run/Walk fundraising effort benefitted the IMF. According to Maddie Hunter, "The IMF is the backbone of so much of what happens, not just in our support group, but in support groups in general. We look to the IMF as a surrogate guide, mentor, and coach that has allowed our group to be sustainable." The 2017 Miles for Myeloma 5K Run/Walk raised nearly \$100,000 for the IMF's research initiatives and patient support programs. The course was USA Track &Field/RRTC-Certified, with beautiful views of Philadelphia's historic Please Touch Museum and the Horticultural Center's Japanese Garden.

Since its inception in 2008, the PMMNG's annual Miles for Myeloma 5K Run/Walk event has raised more than \$1 million for blood cancer organizations while also building awareness and community around myeloma. At first, a PMMNG member who was a professional event planner provided much-needed expertise, then the PMMNG hired a 5K event coordinator to delegate tasks to members and lead the organization to race day. Maddie Hunter shared this because she wants other

groups to realize that fundraising takes time, effort, and resources. Yet, she encourages all groups out there to not be daunted by the task. She recommends, "Choose to organize an event that matches the scale of your resources. Choose what you can follow-through on! The inspiring thing is to raise money and find a way that works for you."

The PMMNG's Miles for Myeloma 5K Run/Walk event has been attended multiple times by the Mayor of Philadelphia, garners huge banners in the city's center, and attracts accomplished runners. As Maddie Hunter explained, "The Miles for Myeloma 5K Run/Walk really has made the people of Philadelphia familiar with myeloma. Some of the attendees are elite runners who may not be related to a myeloma patient. As a result of attending the event, they are educated about the disease."

But perhaps the most inspiring message of the 2017 Miles for Myeloma 5K Run/Walk is that of hope. Diagnosed with myeloma in 2001, Maddie Hunter says events like these raise myeloma awareness and decrease the understandable fears that arise upon diagnosis. As Maddie says, "I'm living a great life, and I have myeloma." Even though she knows that may not be the case for all patients, she hopes that the efforts of the PMMNG help other patients "find a way to a new normal to continue their lives."



Runners celebrate in front of Philadelphia's Please Touch Museum.

The IMF congratulates the patients, caregivers, and volunteers of PMMNG for their tremendous accomplishments, including the organization of a citywide event like Miles for Myeloma. **MT**



Hundreds of runners at the starting line of the 2017 Miles for Myeloma