

Getting past the pain

Arthritis sufferer to run in Hawaiian race

By **EAMONN MAHER**
Staff Writer

Even more excruciatingly frustrating than the painful and stiff joints in her body was the effect arthritis had on Fatima das Neves's daughter Samantha as a youngster.

Largely considered an elderly person's disease, the 41-year-old das Neves suffered from arthritic symptoms since her youth and has had four surgeries on her left hand to keep it from fusing shut.

By age 26, she was diagnosed with Psoriatic arthritis and had to be hospitalized for weeks—only able to communicate with Samantha on the phone or sending home letters with Fatima's mother.

"My childhood memories mainly consist of my mom not being able to do things that other moms could," said Samantha, now 20.

"I remember trying to race her down the street and she would always tell me that she

couldn't. At the time of course this angered me. I never understood why she wasn't able to do everything I could."

Things have changed for the better, however. das Neves credits twice-a-week injections of the drug Enbrel with helping her get back to work at Bell Canada in the wireless network field services division and function at close to normalcy, although the stiffness and pain in her joints is a constant struggle.

So encouraged about the improvements in her health, she's now training to compete in either a 10-km race or full 42.2-km marathon in Hawaii on Dec. 11 as part of the Arthritis Society's Joints in Motion Program, which raises funds and awareness for the four million Canadians of all ages who suffer from the disease.

das Neves said that depending on how her training progresses, she may attempt to walk the marathon.

"I used to watch runners from my car and think, 'What are they doing out in the rain, are they crazy? And now I'm one of them. I'd never felt anything like this before and it's great.'"

das Neves must raise \$5,400 for the trip and she's three-quarters of the way to reaching her goal, with a fashion show, dinner and dance fundraiser scheduled for some time in November.

Literally learning to run for the first time, the Toronto native missed three weeks of training due to an injured ankle caused by not wearing proper shoes, but has built up her stamina and can comfortably complete 5K in training.

"Some days are harder than others. Now that it's getting colder, my joints don't like to go outside, but once you start running, you warm up to it, so you're okay. I'm not going to give up. For me to be able to do this is a dream I've had for a long time," she added.

"I tell people that my fear is being at the end of the line in the race, but everybody says it's the best place to be because everybody's cheering you on. And I'm like, no thank you! We're going to be running along Waikiki Beach and through the streets of Honolulu and the weather should be great for my joints."

To view das Neves's profile on the Joints In Motion website, go to <http://arthritis.akaraisin.com/pledge/Participant/Home.aspx?seid=2152&mid=9&pid=527276>



Kyle Boorman (left) and Dominic Walker of the Gardiner Grizzlies sprint out to the front of the pack during the 11-year-old boys' race at the Optimist Club of Georgetown's elementary school cross-country running meet last week at Cedarvale Park. Stewarttown Middle School won five of the six team titles up for grabs on the day.
Photo by Eamonn Maher

Stingers dominate Optimist meet

The Optimist Club of Georgetown held its annual cross-country running meet at Cedarvale Park last week, involving 231 athletes age 11-13 from elementary schools in the area.

Rain washed out the races scheduled for day one of the meet featuring the 8- to 10-year-old runners.

The Stewarttown Stingers dominated the team standings on day two, winning five of the six titles, with Oakville's Post's Corners taking the 13-year-old girls' overall banner. Acton's McKenzie-Smith Bennett, Silver Creek and Gardiner of Georgetown South also took part, along with Georgetown's St. Francis Assisi and Centennial.

Following are the individual po-

dium finishers:

Girls 11 yrs.

1. Sabrina Bertussi, MSB; 2. Rachel Carson, Stew; 3. Leanne Taggart, Gard

Boys 11 yrs.

1. Danny Saulnier, Stew; 2. Andy Milo, Stew; 3. Jack Watts, SC

Girls 12 yrs.

1. Meaghan Hector, Gard; 2. Rebecca Osterlee, SC; 3. Cassidy Korhonen, Stew

Boys 12 yrs.

1. Cameron Burns, Stew; 2. Griffen Duffeld, PC; 3. Sean Vander Glas, Gard

Girls 13 yrs.

1. Chante Burnett, MSB; 2. Stephanie Knowles, St. F; 3. Maddie Shiell, Stew

Boys 13 yrs.

1. Nolan Haas, Cent; 2. Sam Gates, Stew; 3. Ryan Davies, Cent



Georgetown resident Fatima das Neves and nine-year-old son Caleb get ready for training in preparation for Fatima's trip to Hawaii in December. das Neves will take part in the Arthritis Society's Joints In Motion fundraising run to fulfill a dream she had while suffering acute pain of arthritis.
Photo by Eamonn Maher

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