

Skyline

Gibbons Run hits 10-year mark

By MATT ALDERTON
Correspondent

Scott Seawell used to be quite the runner. Last year he was clocking a six-minute mile, the fastest of his adult life. Then suddenly, Seawell lost his stride. He found himself short of breath, fatigued. He thought, perhaps, it was a virus.

A bone-marrow test revealed what he least expected — leukemia.

Now, a year after his first treatment of chemotherapy, Seawell, 42, of River East, is getting the chance to wear his running shoes again. He will join close to 2,000 supporters and survivors on Thursday, June 17, for the 10th Annual Jim Gibbons Memorial 5K Run, 5K Walk and Survivors' Strut.

Named for Jim Gibbons, an investigative reporter for ABC Channel 7 news, who succumbed to leukemia in 1994, the race benefits the Leukemia Research Foundation



In its 10th year, the Jim Gibbons Memorial run will be held on June 17.

(LRF), based in Evanston. More than a run, however, it is a vehicle for fund raising and a chance to celebrate survival. Leukemia,

See GIBBONS, Page 4

Gibbons

Continued from Page 1

lymphoma and related cancers strike 107,000 Americans every year, according to LRF, and kill approximately 60,000.

"Our slogan is, 'It's more than a race,'" said Maria Zeller, race director. "A lot of people come out, and it's a big 5K, a big party. But we're also raising money to find a cure for leukemia and lymphoma. We want people to realize why it's more than a race. We're really trying to put a face to blood cancer."

Seawell's is just one of those faces. His girlfriend's is another. Rona Seams had been dating Seawell for just over a year when he was diagnosed with leukemia.

"It's like: 'Whoa! What just happened to us?'" Seams said. "We thought, 'Wow, we found each other, we're happy together, the world's in front of us.' And then the poor guy gets sick. It brought us a lot closer together. I never even thought, 'Am I going to stay with this guy or not?'" It was just, "What are we going to do?"

Never a big runner, Seams ran the Jim Gibbons race for the first time last year. She and Seawell both received fliers for the run in the mail. "Scott looked at me and said, 'You're going to run this, aren't you?' and I said, 'Absolutely.'" She kept her promise and raised \$2,500 for leukemia research in the process.

"It's something that comes in front of you when you're 40 years old," Seams said of Seawell. "Your mortality is put right in front of you. In (the race) came along at the right time to show him that friends and family really care."

Joining Seams and Seawell is Maureen Mulryan of Chicago's Beverly community. Mulryan is Jim Gibbons' cousin. Last year, she saw leukemia claim another life, that of 8-year-old Liam Connors, who lived across the street and died just one week after he was diagnosed. He'd just finished second grade.

The one-year anniversary of Liam's death falls just three days after this year's race, and Mulryan has put together a fund-raising team to honor him. At least 150 people, from babies in strollers to Liam's grandparents, have joined Team Liam.

"Leukemia's certainly come a long way," said Mulryan, a nurse, "and a lot of people, thank God, have survived this disease. It's still unfortunate, in the case of Jim and in the case of Liam, that we have lost people to it. I'm hoping that this gives more money towards research to help end this disease."

This year's race begins with a live start on Channel 7 at 6:25 p.m. at Upper Hutchinson Field at Columbus Drive and Balbo Street. The registration fee is \$22 online, \$25 by mail or \$30 on the day of the race. Post-run festivities include music, food and refreshments. For more information, or to register, visit www.leukemia-research.org or call (847) 424-6600.