

9/4/08 (5:19 p.m.) You were in an accident, and as you lie in your hospital bed, you are told you will never walk again. Imagine being given that prognosis. Now imagine working for years in a grueling regime of physical therapy, putting the rest of your life on hold, just to be able to prove that prognosis wrong. What sort of goals would you set? Standing or maybe taking a few aided steps? How about a one-mile race? That's the goal Justin Campagna, who has suffered a debilitating spinal cord injury, has set for himself. And he will get that opportunity at a unique race debuting in Peachtree City on Sept. 6.

The Peachtree City Toga Trot 5K & 1-mile walk is unique because, as the name implies, it will feature the city's first race with runners and walkers in togas. The "Greek" theme stems from the starting and ending point of the race, the Phi Mu Fraternity's national headquarters located on Westpark Drive. One of the co-sponsors of the race is ASCAPA (Atlanta Southern Crescent Alumnae Panhellenic Association) representing 26 international women's sororities and fraternities, which are Greek letter societies of college women and alumnae, who are raising money for their scholarship fund. They are joined in the effort by the Rotary Club of Peachtree City, which is raising money for the Rotary Polio Plus foundation dedicated to the elimination of polio worldwide.



Spinal cord injury patient Justin Campagna (right) standing by his walker, the first person to sign up for Peachtree City Toga Trot, turns in his application to Race Director George Martin

But the real reason this race is unique is because of athletes like Justin as well as Trevor Akers and Tremaine Nathan. All three young men suffered spinal cord injuries and were told they would never walk again. And yet all three will participate in this year's inaugural Toga Trot, each competing in the 1-mile walk. That's right, the 1-mile walk! All three are clients of the internationally known Center IMT Atlanta, located in Fayetteville. Center IMT Atlanta is a physical therapy practice, directed by Susan Leger, which has pioneered the use of innovative integrative manual therapy techniques combined with sophisticated electronic equipment to show remarkable results in spinal cord injury rehabilitation. And while all three young men will compete on at least a portion of the course in wheelchairs, they will also walk a portion of the course depending on their own personal levels of progress. And all three will walk across the finish line.

Of course, the race is open to runners of all abilities and ages. Awards will be given to the top three runners in 14 different age groups, with those running or walking in togas receiving a special award. Don't have a toga? Not a problem as togas will be custom fit and sold prior to the race start.

The inaugural Peachtree City Toga Trot will begin and end at Phi Mu Headquarters, located at 401 Westpark Drive, at 8 a.m. on Saturday, Sept 6, with a post-race party at Partners Pizza. More information and applications are available at the ASCAPA website, www.ascapa.org, the Peachtree City Rotary Club website at www.ptcrotary.org, or the race website at www.togatrot5k.org.