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Broward Children's Center walkathon set to raise funds for kids

November 4, 2011 | STACY CASE coralsprings@tribune.com

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As the Broward Children's Center prepares for its annual walkathon, various people from within the community are clearing their schedules to participate.

Melissa Schwartzman, of Coral Springs, has no ties to the event or whatsoever, but likes what the walk signifies.

"It's about doing something to raise funds or for children in the area," said Schwartzman, 23, who will be involved in this endeavor for the first time. "There are so many in need and I want to do something for a good cause."

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The center specializes in helping local youths, including infants, with a variety of extreme health care needs. Fundraising events or such as Miles for Smiles, which is scheduled for Nov. 12 at Pompano Beach's Goodyear Blimp Base, aids in the center's continued efforts in assisting such medical dependency and assistance.

Last year, the benefit attracted approximately 200 walkers and raised \$34,000. It also served to commemorate the center's 40th anniversary.

Executive Director Giselle Reid would like to see this year's event hit an all-time high of donations to \$40,000.

"It's amazing and heartwarming to see how much support has been generated for the walk, and how much it has grown over the past eight years," said Reid, of Coral Springs. "This year will be even more special as it marks the center's 40th year of service, and because the walk draws in so much community support, it really highlights what we're all about."

Stacy Mager has a highly positive opinion of the non-profit foundation.

"The center has been life-changing for me and my family, and events such as this where everyone comes together to raise funds for the facilities that house our children are incredible," said Mager, whose five-year-old daughter has received assistance for being globally developmentally delayed.

The center serves more than 1,200 children and families annually through its 12 different programs.

"All of the children we've served throughout the past eight years have benefited from walk proceeds in some way," Reid said. "Every dollar raised goes toward recreational and educational or programming for our children. Any trip our kids take, they need a nurse, respiratory therapist, medical equipment and specialized transportation."

Although Miles for Smiles is a traditional walkathon, participants can use whichever mode of non-motorized transportation they choose, to cover the 4.7-mile route along the Pompano Beach Airpark.

"The center has been so welcoming and encouraging," Mager said. "When I drop off my daughter there, I never look back."

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