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Moving tribute to a long-running teacher

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By Tom Leo
Staff writer

Every day for 9,406 consecutive days, longtime Baldwinsville teacher and coach Mark Bader has run. That's more than 25 years.

He's run through snowstorms and subzero weather, with a broken ankle and broken toes.

Recently, he's run even after undergoing chemotherapy and radiation treatments, never missing a day. He's battled squamous cell carcinoma, an advanced form of skin cancer. Bader figures he's run about 30,000 miles in that time, averaging about three miles a day.

But today, a day after cancer-related surgery at University Hospital, the running stopped, ending a streak Bader says began June 20, 1981.

In Bader's honor Friday, about 450 people, including students, colleagues and athletes he's coached ran three symbolic laps, around the bus circle at Baldwinsville's Baker High School.

"The kids and the faculty wanted to do something to show Mark our spirit is with him, and we're thinking of him," said Bruce Quimby, Baldwinsville athletic director.

"We're a family and he's like a father to us," said Justin Montague, a junior on the baseball team whom Bader has coached. "We're like his kids. We're out here to show respect to him."

Lindy Hess, a friend of Bader, suggested the run. "It just seemed fitting," Hess said. "We'd be on a hunting trip and Mark would get up at 3 o'clock in the morning just so he could get his run in."

"The doctors say they've never seen or heard of anybody who ran all the way through chemo," said Jim Jerome, who helped organize Friday's run.

Bader, 52, who's married with no children, said he was touched.

"I can't tell you how many cards and phone calls I've received," he said Thursday. "It's kind of overwhelming."

Bader was listed in fair condition Friday afternoon, a hospital spokeswoman said.

"I do plan to run again," Bader said. "I don't know if I'll start a new streak . . . but I probably will."

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