



■ Céline Parent with type 1 diabetes, and Matthew Taylor with cerebral palsy, both Global Heroes, preparing to run the Medtronic Twin Cities Marathon.

Running despite difficulties

Céline Parent and Matthew Taylor – Global Heroes.

By Doug Geddie



IF THERE'S ONE THING you can count on runners to be chatting about while running, other than the weather, it's how they're feeling. I've heard it all, from vague

knee ailments to blackened toenails.

At least I thought I'd heard it all.

A few months ago I was fortunate to accompany my friend, Céline, to a unique running event in Minneapolis/St. Paul. That city is the site of the Twin Cities Marathon and 10 Mile Run. It's also the home of the Medtronic Corporation.

Medtronic manufacture mechanical devices for health care like insulin pumps, pacemakers, defibrillators, shunts and a host of other amazing devices that help keep people alive. Medtronic is the title sponsor of the Medtronic Twin Cities Marathon. Because of the nature of their business, Medtronic thought the race sponsorship might be an interesting way to involve the people who have benefitted from their medical devices and who are also active run-

ners. The Global Heroes program was born.

Global Heroes are runners from all over the world who are selected by Medtronic because they are runners who have a medical disability but have overcome it and continue to be high level athletes.

My friend Céline was selected because she's a type 1 diabetic and a runner, who has inspired legions of others with her daily blog on running with diabetes and by helping other diabetics in our community through the Niagara Diabetes Centre. Often people who are newly diagnosed think their life has ended. Céline is pretty amazing at convincing them that their life has just begun!

Céline was one of 25 athletes who were invited to Minneapolis/St. Paul to be recognized for their contribution to health care and healthy living and to compete in the Twin Cities Marathon and 10 Mile runs. I got to carry her luggage.

When we arrived we met the other 24 Global Heroes and out came the most amazing stories of triumph over adversity that I have ever heard.

Every story is unique and memorable, but of them all, I'd like to repeat Matthew's story...

Matthew Taylor was born prematurely with cerebral palsy. The doctors told his mother that he might never walk. Once he was old enough to try to walk, Matthew took his first staggering steps and announced to anyone who would listen that he wanted to be a runner. This was brave talk from a little kid who could hardly control his right side and had speech and learning difficulties.

Matthew had surgery on his leg tendons and bones when he was 5 and 11. He received regular Botox injections to tame his spasticity. Despite the surgeries and treatments, Matthew had severe mobility problems. That didn't bother Matthew though, and although he couldn't walk like the other kids, he joined his school's track team. Every time he tried to run he was dead last, but everyone cheered for him until he finished. His mother just cried.

In 2010, Matthew had surgery and they implanted a Medtronic intrathecal baclofen drug pump in his back to control his muscle spasticity. The device allows Matthew relief from the spasticity and much more regular movement.

Matthew is 15 now. His movements and speech are awkward, but controlled. He has a wicked sense of humour. And he runs in races to raise money for the Children's Hospital in Florida that has taken care of him since birth.

This October he ran in Minneapolis/St. Paul as a Global Hero. He has an awkward gait, but in the 10 mile he managed to run by Céline and me with about a mile to go. And he was laughing.

I nearly cried. And it was out of admiration and respect for a kid with determination, a health system that kept on trying to help, a mother who encouraged despite her fears, and scientific breakthroughs that have produced devices that give renewed life to those who need it. **HWS**

Doug Geddie has been running most of his life for fitness. In addition to running, he cycles and loves to compete in combination duathlon events. He has completed 11 marathons and 21 duathlons.