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Jeremie Kasmarcak: When I think about Team for Kids, I honestly think about the community of people first before I think about running. I always joke that running isn't necessarily everyone's priority at practice. Brunches, seeing their friends, just being together is most people's top priority when they come to TFK practice. And then we have to do our run. Team for Kids is a place where everyone belongs.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Hey everybody, and welcome to Set The Pace, the official podcast of New York Road Runners presented by Peloton. I'm Rob Simmelkjaer, the CEO of New York Road Runners with me from Peloton, Becs Gentry. Hello, Becs.

00:00:43

Becs Gentry: Hello.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: How are you this second week of the year?

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Becs Gentry: Oh, good. We made it through the first week with smiles and joy, I think. We made it through Quitters Day, which is...

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Rob Simmelkjaer: What is that? January 10th?

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Becs Gentry: 9th or 10th, one of the two.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: 9th or 10th, yeah.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah. Which is...

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Have you quit any resolutions yet? Did you make anything to quit?

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Becs Gentry: I don't make resolutions.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. Okay.

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Becs Gentry: I'm staunchly against resolutions that make me change too much. I don't think it's good for us to wake up. Really, nothing happens. You go to bed on the 31st of December 2025, and you woke up on January 1st, 2026, same bed, probably in the same PJs, probably the same sheets. You're the same person. And I do not love this vibe of like, I must change everything about me now I've woken up and it's a new year, because you were a really lovely person when you went to bed and you're still a really lovely person when you woke up.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: I love that. Very nice.

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Becs Gentry: I think people could do with thinking about it more of brushing things up and putting the sparkle back to things that they already had in their back pocket, but pulling it out and bringing it to your forefront of your attention a little bit more. And making sure they're sustainable because I speak to some people and I have a terrible poker face, so I'm sorry if you are one of those people that I've been speaking to and my face contorts when you're telling me this list of resolutions. I'm like, "Dude,-

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Oh, not me.

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Becs Gentry: ... there's no way you're going to keep that going after the end of January. So why set yourself up to fail? Do stuff that you can continue all the way through this year and feel good." So no, I'm not giving myself the chance to quit anything. I'm a brusher upper.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, I think you got to keep it small and manageable if you do them at all because people go too big.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah, and continuous.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yep, absolutely.

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Becs Gentry: Yes. I want to get to December and be like, "I'm still brushing this up."

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Rob Simmelkjaer: I imagine we have a lot of resolution types in the Road Runners audience and a lot of the resolutions are, a lot of them are probably running related for folks.

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Becs Gentry: Yes.

00:02:43

Rob Simmelkjaer: I don't know if you came into the year with any goals that you mentioned before you've been picking up your running a little bit. So tell me about that. How much are you running now? And is there something that we're getting ready for?

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Becs Gentry: There is. I am unable to talk about it right now.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Oh, those are the best ones.

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Becs Gentry: Aren't they? But no...

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Rob Simmelkjaer: When will you be able to talk about it?

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Becs Gentry: End of this month really.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Oh, okay. Just a couple of weeks. Okay. Okay.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah. You know what it's like. There's things that you've got to organize and put into action and all of that. But it's definitely, my mileage is the same. I haven't started on a training plan per se as yet, but I really do need to get my behind into gear and speak to my coach, and be like, "All right, I need a bit more structure." But right now, I'm just running, but I'm running with more intention and more purpose and more focus over my paces. And the time I spend out there isn't quite as frivolous as it was for the last six months of 2025, which is quite nice. I'm ready for this.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: It's good. It's good to feel ready. It's good to want it, to not feel like you have to do it, but you'll want to do it. It's great to get back to that. And

after all you've done in the last year and a half, I can imagine it's taken some time to getting back to wanting it. Same for me, by the way. I mean, you ran 777. I ran three marathons in 15 months, so a break for me. In my case, a bit of a forced break because I've been hurt. My knee's been not great the last couple of months, so I've kind of had to shut it down, transition to some other exercises, being forced to take some rest. My doctor, Dr. Jordan Metzl from HSS, he's actually going to be on the show in a couple of weeks. So we'll talk about what it means to be shut down by your doctor, as he's done for me for a little while. But you know what? It's good because at some point that restlessness builds up and I'll get back to wanting it at some point.

00:04:49

Becs Gentry: Yeah. Well, that's it. That's it. That's what I mean about non-resolutions. Sometimes it can be about taking your foot off, I guess, in order to become more passionate and therefore motivated about doing something a little later on. So not an injury. I'm not happy that you're injured, or if you're in pain or anyway.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: No, no. It's best to avoid those. It's true. We'll talk about it more. But I'm hanging in there. I definitely have had to pull back. I ran the midnight run, but it was a slow jog. It was a very slow jog.

00:05:21

Becs Gentry: Very funny.

00:05:21

Rob Simmelkjaer: Just so I could get some different views of the fireworks that night. That was really the main reason for that. Well, we had plenty of people show up, Becs, this past Saturday, more than 5,000 on a pretty mild day. We've had a nice thaw in New York-

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Becs Gentry: We have.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: ... the last week or two. Thanks-

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Becs Gentry: Snow was gone.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: ... goodness. Yes. No more snow. Needed that

to happen. The Joe Kleinerman 10K was a pretty nice day. Of course, this is a race that celebrates the life and legacy of founding member of New York Road Runners, an employee and advocate, volunteer, Joe Kleinerman. So a great day in Central Park. The winners, it was Issame El Jazouli, 30:36 on the men's side for United Mexican Runners of New York. The non-binary winner was Pierce Lydon with a time of 42:10 for Beasts from Riis, team I haven't heard of before. And the women's side, Carey Nelson, 42:10 from 212 Athletic Saucony. So congrats to the winners and everybody who finished on a nice day this past Saturday for the Joe K10K. Our next race coming up in Central Park will be the Fred Lebow Half. So we're looking forward to that. We'll be talking about that over the next couple of weeks. That's always a popular one. Hoping for a good day for those who are going to make that trek up Harlem Hill. What is it? Three times, I think, for that race.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah, I think so.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Oh, man. Those people, -

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Becs Gentry: Oh, it's great.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: ... they have my unending admiration, the folks who run the Fred. I've never done it. I'd like to do it one of these years, but haven't made it yet. So that'll be next up on our schedule. Becs, coming up on the show today by popular demand, we're going to talk about Team for Kids. Our head of peer-to-peer fundraising at New York Road Runners, Jeremie Kasmarcak, is going to come join us and talk about Team for Kids, TFK as we call it. What it is, because a lot of folks don't know exactly what Team for Kids is. The fact is it's very closely connected to New York Road Runners and all of our programs. How to get into it, what it's like, the experience of running for TFK, and just everything you need to know about this amazing charity running team. So that's coming up in just a minute.

00:07:29

Becs Gentry: Peloton is taking running and race tech to the next level with the new Peloton cross-training series, Tread+, powered by Peloton IQ. Built for runners who want top tier performance, the Tread+ helps you train smarter and get race ready with precision. Peloton IQ offers personalized insights that evolve as you progress, so you can fine tune

your pacing and peak at the right moment. And with strength workouts designed to build the muscle you need to support every mile, your training goes beyond the run. Plus, pace target classes designed to build consistency, boost speed, and improve your splits. Every single run supports your full training cycle, from recovery miles to challenging race pace intervals. Experience our most advanced tread yet at onepeloton.com. Peloton, the official digital fitness partner of New York Road Runners.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Here at New York Road Runners, Team for Kids is more than just a charity program. It's a training ground for runners of all ages, paces, and experience levels. It's also a vibrant and passionate community that builds lifelong friendships. Jeremie Kasmarcak has led Team for Kids for nearly a decade, guiding it into one of the most impactful and in demand charity running programs in the world. Since its founding back in 2002, Team for Kids Runners have raised over \$120 million to support free youth and community running programs through New York Road Runners, helping kids all around the city and beyond discover movement, confidence, and belonging. And Jeremie's here today to give us some behind the scenes perspectives on Team for Kids and what it takes to build a charity program that sells out and changes lives year after year after year. Jeremie, we've wanted you on set the pace for quite a while to talk about TFK. It's great to have you on.

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Jeremie Kasmarcak: Thank you. Thank you. No, I'm going to do a quick shout out to my super fan. More so your super fan, Jeff Gontero, loyal listener in the pod, but thrilled and excited to be here.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yes, I remember Jeff. Absolutely. We love Jeff. Thanks for listening, Jeff, leave a review so we know you're listening today.

00:09:43

Becs Gentry: Yes, please.

00:09:44

Rob Simmelkjaer: Absolutely. So Jeremie, it's funny how many people out there don't know exactly what Team for Kids is. They see the bright, we call them green. I call them yellow jerseys that you're wearing right there. They know the brand, but they don't always know what it's connected to or what it's raising money for. So simple question, what is Team for

Kids?

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Jeremie Kasmarcak: So Team for Kids is a program of New York Road Runners. We are a group of adult runners who fundraise in exchange for our entries into big deal races like the Abbott World Marathon Majors and the Five Borough Race Series. And all of the funds we raise go to further New York Road Runners' mission in support of our youth and community programs. So all of the youth races, all of the programmings we do in schools, youth wheelchairs and beyond to our open runs that get communities moving, our senior striders that get older adults running. Everything that we do to give back to the community, that's what Team for Kids funds.

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Becs Gentry: Unbelievable. And there is no denying that it is one of the most worthy causes out there, keeping the next generations thriving and feeling good about themselves. And talking of which, Team for Kids hit a major milestone quite recently. So since 2002, I think it was, 2002, members have raised over, ready for this, \$120 million for New York Road Runners Youth and Community Initiatives. Jeremie, as a member of Team for Kids, what does reaching this huge milestone mean to you?

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Jeremie Kasmarcak: I think it's important for visibility, for people to understand that we're out here running these marathons and these races, and we are making an impact. We've been doing it for a long time, but I think that number being so big has gotten a lot of attention for us and people are like, "Whoa, this isn't just a group of people going on their runs, training together." This is a group of people who are heavily impacting and changing access to running and access to fitness for youth across the country, but here specifically in New York City.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, Jeremie. And I think of Team for Kids as there's a couple different sides to it. There's the impact that it's making, which I want to talk about first. And then there's the community aspect of it and what it means for people to be a part of it. We'll get to that second. But starting with the impact side, I mean, you mentioned some of the programs. Our youth programs out of the gate is really where I'd like to focus. People, a lot of the runners who run our races regularly, they see those youth races. They see the kids running, whether it's in

Times Square during the United Airlines NYC Half or maybe on the boardwalk there in Coney Island next to the RBC Brooklyn Half. So you see them, but maybe you don't realize how big they are, how impactful they are, how many of them they are. And by the way, how free they are because those races are all free, which is a big part of what Team for Kids raises money for.

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Jeremie Kasmarcak: Exactly. And I think, I mean, the youth bases are probably the most visible, but maybe not the biggest thing we do. I think for me, it's really Rising New York Road Runners in the schools and community centers that have the most lasting impact and the biggest touch of the kids. I think when I think about running, I think about all the things that it's done for me. I think about how it helps me manage stress, it helps me stay fit, how it helps me make new friends when I've moved to new cities. And just giving kids those tools that are just so much more than physical fitness, which is also extremely important, but those coping tools, those mental health tools, those social skills is enormous. One of the things I always go back to is years ago at a TFK breakfast, we had a site leader from, I think, Arizona come and speak to our group and that his school had a very high population of unhoused children.

And one of the things that he shared with us was that the kids back then used to get incentives for their miles. Say they'd run so many miles and they'd earn a keychain and they earned a shirt and they'd earned something. And one of the children was so proud to earn the keychain. The keychain meant so much to this child that they glued it onto their school path. And it's just a keychain. We think it's a keychain, but to this kid, that was a sense of permanence and belonging. That keychain meant something. He had a place where he belonged that was stable, that wasn't changing, and he could go back to. So I mean, I'm overwhelmed, but it means so much to give these kids permanence, belonging, community, in addition to the fitness skills that we're teaching them.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. And Becs, the numbers are incredible now for the Rising New York Road Runners program that Jeremie mentioned. We're now at just over 100,000 kids in New York City alone who are part of that Rising New York Runners program. They're running at the elementary school level, could be the middle school level as well, where we're actually doing some additional work to grow middle school running in New York City, 100,000 kids and rising in New York, and then about another 100,000 around the country as well. And

so a lot of what Team for Kids is paying for is those incentives that Jeremie talked about, the T-shirts and other things that they get. And then Becs, we know adults are driven by getting those medals, right?

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Becs Gentry: Yeah.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: And so we know what a medal or a free T-shirt can do to motivate an adult. Think about what it does for kids.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah, absolutely. I can't even imagine. And I think one of the biggest things for me when I think about Team for Kids is knowing the struggles that kids go through. And for a lot of children running with these programs is actually their only chance to play sports, which is heartbreaking to me as a mother, as a human, not just be a mother, like a human on a human level. And I just think I'd love to know from you, when you think about going to see these kids and that it's potentially their only chance to get out and run like a kid, we're told to do that. How does that make you feel on a day-to-day basis?

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Jeremie Kasmarcak: Yeah. Same with me, Becs. Growing up, I grew up in Ohio. There was no shortage of space. Every school had a full gym, a track, all the things. When I moved to New York, I worked with schools and it became clear that these kids have no space. They're lucky if they have a multipurpose room or a cafe gymetaria to do some laps between pulling out the cafeteria tables. There's no space for them to have kids in a lot of these places or space to have fun and run around. It's a big deal. I have a five-year-old in a New York City apartment and I see him bouncing off the walls. They have to burn that energy all the time.

So we have to create these outlets for them. But again, beyond the physical fitness component, I was a really shy kid. How I made friends was joining a team and showing up there and becoming a part of the community. So it's the social aspect, it's the mental health aspect, it's the fitness aspect. I mean, running has given me so many things that I feel proud and I feel really good about passing it on to the next generation, knowing that they're facing new and different challenges, but a lot of the same challenges of being a kid and figuring things out. And it's hard.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah. I love that you said that, that it's the mental element as well as the physical, because of course, it's important to be healthy physically, but for these kids, yeah, it could take them away from being in that alone space to being in a space where they feel accepted and seen and loved by new people. And they may discover something so special about themselves that they may not have realized was even in them before if they were just always on the outside of a group. And yeah, I'm so glad you said that.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Another thought that I have when it comes to the kids and what they get out of a lot of our programs, the Team for Kids Funds, is just also getting out of their neighborhoods. I've actually had a chance to talk to a number of kids and coaches at various events. And I remember one kid I met at the kids' kickoff a couple of years ago, actually, the first time we had that event the week before the marathon in Central Park, and the kids were so excited to just be in Central Park. And I was talking to a few of them, and one or two of them told me they'd never been to Central Park before. These are New York City kids.

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Becs Gentry: Wait, and they're New York kids?

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Rob Simmelkjaer: These are New York City kids.

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Becs Gentry: No.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: And this was, I think the kid was probably about nine, 10 years old from the Bronx and had never actually had a chance to go visit Central Park. So you sometimes don't think about our city and how cut off it can be for certain people, how they have a hard time if their parents are busy or not present, even getting out of their immediate neighborhoods. And so going to Times Square for the Times Square Kids Run or going to Coney Island for sure, which a lot of people don't get to, or even Central Park. That's also part of just seeing the city and for what it is and just expanding your horizons, Jeremie.

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Jeremie Kasmarcak: Definitely. And I mean, some of what we're able to offer is so special. Times Square doesn't shut down for very many things. I think it's us and Times Square or New Year's Eve. So for those kids to be able to run that course on that street and be a part of it is amazing. Thinking about Icahn, we have the top athletes of the whole world run on that track, but so do our kids. So being able to not only open up the city to them, but give them these opportunities. They're running on the same track as Olympians. I've not done that. Maybe I should go to more jamborees, but that's a big deal. It's just like a kid being able to run the bases at Yankee Stadium. These kids are able to run where all these amazing athletes have run. So it's really special to give them these opportunities because they're just as deserving as everyone else.

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Becs Gentry: Absolutely. Well, I think it's safe to say that the kids in all of these, all the communities and all of the organizations are so well looked after once they get involved in this. But let's talk about the wider community that's involved in Team for Kids because there's also the adults like yourself that run these races and you're the people who do the fundraising. And I want to hear some stories. I want to hear... I mean, we know we highlighted in the podcast a lot of the times a lot of our member moments are incredible runners from Team for Kids. And I think one member recently completed his first marathon at 75 years old after two knee replacements. What other stories have you got like that that you can share with us from this great community?

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Jeremie Kasmarcak: I mean, I think working with Team for Kids has taught me that if you really want to do it, you can run a marathon. You have to want to do it, but anyone can do it. We have people, young people, older people, people dealing with really heavy life stuff who just come to practice and we get through it one step at a time. When I think about Team for Kids, I honestly think about the community of people first before I think about running. I always joke that running isn't necessarily everyone's priority at practice. Brunches, seeing their friends, just being together is most people's top priority when they come to TFK Breakfast, and then we have to do our run. Team for Kids is a place where everyone belongs. We have amazingly fast and talented runners. There's one runner who I love who's so friendly and so happy.

He's always like, "Jeremie, come run with me." And as soon as I take two steps, he's like 900 yards ahead of me.

There's no way I can run with him. We have amazingly talented runners, and we also have a lot of people who are first-timers or bucket list runners. This is going to be the one and only, and they want and need the support they want and are looking for the community to do it together. There's people coming off of major life changes, major injuries. Just, more than anything, being with the community just makes me believe, if you want something, it's never too late, and if you really want to do it, you can do it.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. It's such a strong community. I will say it actually surprised me. When I came in to New York Road Runners and came in, obviously CEO and knew TFK was a thing, knew that it was a big fundraising platform for New York Road Runners, but I didn't realize what it was, because when I started going to races and going to the breakfast that you guys have, whether it's the big one we have in New York before the marathon or the smaller ones we have in the other cities where we've got teams going, the other Abbott World Marathon Major cities, I was like, "Whoa, these folks, they know each other." They've known each other for a long time. They're like real friends. And a lot of them, it seems to me, they came at first for that entry. They couldn't get in through the drawing, couldn't do nine plus one, wanted to run London or Chicago or something, but then they stayed for the people and for the community. And it really is an unbelievable family vibe that you see when you come to these events.

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Jeremie Kasmarcak: Yeah. We had one runner who's among everyone's all time favorite TFK runner, who is a bigger man. He was probably over 300 pounds when he came to us. He came to his first practice and expected us to say, "This probably isn't for you. Maybe you shouldn't do this." That's not what happened. I mean, I always joke that our runners will fight to welcome new runners to practice. Everybody wants to introduce themselves. Everybody wants to run with you. Everybody wants to be a mentor and help new runners learn everything about Team for Kids, fundraising and running. It's just such a warm and welcoming community. And when you think about running so often it's about my personal goals. I'm running this race. I want to hit this time. And we do. We're all working together to get to the finish line, to hit our PRs, to collect our stars. But when you're running with Team for Kids, there's another level of we're all doing this together, we're all going to get to the finish line somehow together, and we're doing it for something bigger. So I think when you add the layer of fundraising to support

youth and community programs, it makes it bigger somehow. It feels bigger. You know you're running for your PR, but you're running... So all sorts of people can have their own PRs.

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Becs Gentry: And I think kind of what you're saying is that's what keeps all of these thousands of people connected even when you're not all in the same city, right?

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Jeremie Kasmarcak: Exactly. Or I mean, if you don't run with each other at practice because you're not the same pace, there's so much common ground and so many brunches after practice to build community and become friends.

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Becs Gentry: These brunches sound legendary.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Oh, yeah. I've had some great breakfast with TFK.

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Becs Gentry: Sign me up.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: And I feel guilty sometimes because I'm having this great brunch and I'm not even running the marathon the next day. I'm just hanging out with the team, but it's really good stuff. Let's talk about those practices, Jeremie, because coaching is a big part of what makes the Team for Kids experience. We've got a great coaching team at New York Road Runners. Of course, a lot of our coaches do the group training, but so many of them really help out with this TFK, this team and getting this team coached up for their races. So talk about what a practice is like, also the long runs and what someone can expect from the coaching point of view if they sign up for Team for Kids.

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Jeremie Kasmarcak: Yeah. So if you run with Team for Kids and you're doing a marathon, you're going to get a virtual training plan. You're going to have access to our coaches and our staff all the time. One thing that might surprise you is we're not a very big team in terms of our staff. We're actually small, but pretty mighty. If you email us, there is a good chance that I will be responding. And if not, there's only about four other people who would be responding to that email. We're not bots, we're people. And

I think that's what makes us special because we build these real relationships. We have a dedicated team of coaches who are all professionally trained coaches who are out there week after week running with you. I think one of our most popular coach, Coach Sid, he always says, "It's not about your finished time. It's about the finish line." We're out there together.

Our goal is honestly in running this program is to thank you and give you the best experience possible because you in the fundraising department are doing so much for us. We want to say thank you with the best experience. So we're out there, we want to make sure you're trained, you're prepared, everybody gets to that finish line, everybody accomplishes their goals. I mean, if you're in New York City, even if you don't live here, if you're in New York City on a trip, come to practice. People are nervous about it, but once they come, they're always saying, "I can't believe I'm not doing that every single week." We do our warmups, we do speed work once a week and we do our long runs. And I'll say running 20 miles or three hours is a lot easier to do with a group of people than it is to do by yourself. And I am a solo runner. I do not love running with groups of people, but when I'm on those long runs, I'm like, "This is way better. This is what I should always be doing."

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Becs Gentry: Absolutely. I'm with you on the mindset of, I'm a solo runner and I love to do as many miles as I can by myself until I do it with a group and I'm like, "I'm such a fool, why don't I do this more often? It's so much easier." Well, not so much, but comparatively, it feels like it's a breeze. And as you say, that celebration afterwards, whether it's a high five, a hug or brunch or whatever it is, it's just so much more rewarding than just pat yourself on the back and get on with your day, for sure. Okay. So we talked about the training perks. We've talked about the perks that come from the fundraising and the actual miles that are covered here. Let's talk about race day and the runner experience because it is something special that you all get and deservedly so. So talk us through what are the biggest perks for TFK on race day?

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Jeremie Kasmarcak: Yeah. So they're different across all the races we offer. Not every race is a New York Road Runners race, so we can only do so much at other people's races, but at the TCS New York City Marathon, I'd say TFK runners have about as good of an experience as any other runner out there.

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Becs Gentry: Yay.

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Jeremie Kasmarcak: We have our own ferry that takes you to our own start tent. We have our own block of porta- potties, so you do not wait with the people. You have your own porta...

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Rob Simmelkjaer: That is gold.

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Jeremie Kasmarcak: I know.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Your own set of porta potties.

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Jeremie Kasmarcak: This is like (inaudible) .

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Becs Gentry: Yeah. Both of those things are ready.

00:30:18

Jeremie Kasmarcak: This is one of my main selling points is you will not wait in line to go to the bathroom on race morning. And if you're a nervous peer, this is a big deal. And you're in our tent with our team. So our coaches are there. Our coaches are leading our warmups, walking you into the corral. TFK runners have their own corrals within the wave. So you're with the team. So even if you don't know anyone, you trained in a different state or a different country, you followed us on the Facebook page. You're going to meet the people that you saw on race day and you're going to be able to find someone in that corral to run with for the whole race. People have made so many friends on race day just in those TFK corrals. And there's a lot of beautiful stories of, I was a mentor, I wasn't your mentor, but you're struggling, so now we're going to finish this together.

A lot of that happens on race day. And then when you finish, we have an early exit from Central Park. If the toilets didn't get you, this early exit from Central Park really should be the selling point. You don't have to do the full zombie death march. You get to turn off a little bit early and come straight to our tent. We have a bunch of volunteers waiting there with signs and ponchos to snatch you up, pull you out of the masses and come over to our recovery tent so you can sit down, have a snack, figure out

how you're going to untie your shoes, get your life together a little bit before you hobble home.

00:31:51

Becs Gentry: That is incredible. And for those of you who don't know what Jeremie is referring to as the death march is, Rob's like, "Guys, be quiet."

00:32:00

Rob Simmelkjaer: It's not a death march.

00:32:02

Becs Gentry: It's a quiet walk.

00:32:03

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yes, it's a long walk off.

00:32:03

Jeremie Kasmarcak: It's a long walk off.

00:32:05

Becs Gentry: You got a long way to exit the park, which involves a little uphill. And then you got to exit the park and then you've got that walk down. And it's just very quiet. And I think that's the juxtaposition people talk about is you've come from 26.2 miles of absolute noise and passion and motivation and love. And then you do that mile walk back down to Columbus Circle and it's so quiet. It's scary. So that's all we're talking about. Nothing scary that you go through.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: It's definitely a perk. It's definitely a big perk for Team for-

00:32:40

Becs Gentry: It's such a perk to not do that.

00:32:40

Rob Simmelkjaer: ... Kids Runners to get out early. No doubt about it.

00:32:43

Becs Gentry: Yeah. Yeah. Every single person.

00:32:44

Rob Simmelkjaer: That's why everybody should run for Team for Kids if they can.

00:32:45

Becs Gentry: Exactly. Oh, my gosh. Oh, everything. Everything you've mentioned. I'm like, "Wow." It's not spoiled though. I think a lot of your runners may feel spoiled, but for the goodness that they are spreading in the world, it's truthfully wonderful.

00:33:06

Rob Simmelkjaer: There's no such thing as being spoiled running 26.2 miles, right? No matter what you got at the start or the finish, you did the hard part no matter what, and that's running the race. So shout out to everybody who gets it done. Jeremie, let's talk a little bit about the fundraising side. What the commitment is that people are signing up for when they do Team for Kids. And for a lot of folks, fundraising is intimidating. A lot of people have never had to do it before. You're asking friends and family for money for you to go run. I think for a lot of folks that can be awkward. Talk about that commitment and about how you've seen people and a lot of repeat runners get more and more comfortable with fundraising as they've gotten more experience.

00:33:50

Jeremie Kasmarcak: Yes. I will say I am someone who doesn't like to ask people for money. And I've fundraised a few times for us. And every time I've found that it's easier and less scary than I think it's going to be. You don't know what you're going to do, how you're going to do it, but it happens. I think all of our races have different price points. So if it's a Five-Borough race, that's going to be a cheaper race. I think, well, for the marathon, TCS New York City Marathon, there's different levels. 4,000, 5,000...

00:34:25

Rob Simmelkjaer: The base level is 4,000?

00:34:28

Jeremie Kasmarcak: Three.

00:34:28

Rob Simmelkjaer: Sorry, 3,000.

00:34:28

Jeremie Kasmarcak: 4,000, 5,000, 10,000. And it's just a different price point for the different races based on how much we're able to do for you at the races. And a lot of times with the other races, what the charity program requirements are. We're not in charge of all the races, so we have to follow the other races rules for those entries that we get. I'll

say with fundraising, the first ask is always the hardest. It's always the hardest and scariest, but as soon as you rip off the bandaid, it gets easier. You find your cadence, you find what you're going to say. My recommendation is to really just tee yourself up with a softball for that first half. Someone who's definitely going to say yes to you. Keep the training wheels on with easy ask as long as you're still getting comfortable. But then once you get used to it, it gets a lot easier.

The first one's always the hardest. And we always stress, find your why. Why Team for Kids? What about Team for Kids resonates with you? Why is this the charity you chose? What does this mean to you? We have runners who have struggled with their weight in the past, and that's their why. We have runners who work in hospitals and preventative healthcare is really important to them. We have a lot of people who are parents and teachers, and that's their why. So yes, you're raising money for Team for Kids, but the fundraising part really is about asking your friends and family to support you and doing this big thing that you're trying to do. I always say too, ask people in person. It's so much harder to say no in person than it is to ignore a text or an email. If it's someone that you know that's in your network that loves and cares about you, that's a really hard no to your face.

So pro-tip, ask in person because it's really hard to say no when you're right there. Follow up, be persistent. A lot of times people, if you ask the first time and they don't donate the first time, it's not because they don't want to. They just got busy. So follow up and ask. The worst they can say is, "No, not right now. Can't do it." And then you move on. But yeah, it's hard and it can be intimidating to get going. But once you get into it, you'll find your flow, you'll find your story, you'll know what you're going to say, how you're going to ask. It gets a lot more comfortable. And if you're still overwhelmed, we have resources. So we can do individual consultations. We can help you create a chart of your network, work on what you're going to say. We also have fundraising office hours and we have mentors.

So we have a group of volunteers who've run with us who we can pair you up with and they can help generate ideas. I think when it comes to fundraising, the higher amounts, like 4,000, 5,000, 10,000, a lot of people find their friends and family members who work at companies that do match giving. If you have a friend or family member who works at a place like that, it's like gold because it basically just doubles all the donations you get through them. So there are systems in place that we can help you navigate and direct you to that can help with the fundraising. So part of Team

for Kids experience is fundraising support because we're asking you to do kind of a lot and something big for us. So we're going to do everything we can to help you get there.

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Becs Gentry: I think that's really well said because there's so many different tiers that you can attach yourself to when it comes to fundraising, but the pressure is real for fundraising, because for the first part, you've chosen to fundraise for this specific cause because it means something to you. And then I think a lot of people don't do maybe races or they don't do fundraising because of the pressure and they get a little bit like, "Oh, well, what's going to happen if I don't hit my fundraising mark?" Can you just talk a little bit about that from your experience of either if people have come to you because they're intimidated or if you've had people who haven't hit their fundraising mark and how they've dealt with that?

00:39:01

Jeremie Kasmarcak: Yeah, I would say that's a very important thing. Before you sign up, definitely think about your network, think about your bank account. If first push comes to shove, would you be making that donation? I mean, it is the commitment you're making. You're getting the entry and you're committing to the fundraising. I think a lot of people get in trouble because they wait too long to start. You're not going to start training for the TCS New York City Marathon in September. You probably shouldn't start fundraising in September either. You have a lot more time to try new things, ask more people, get plans in place if you start right away. I think a lot of runners get in trouble when they procrastinate, and it might be because they're nervous about it, they don't know where to start. And that's we're here, we're here to help you with all of that. We can put a plan in place, we can help you identify your network, we can help you identify your why.

But people who end up making the donation on their own behalf are a lot of times people who really haven't started before September, haven't really thought about it, and then all of a sudden, it's October and that's the fundraising deadline. So I think it is a serious decision. For me, I was really nervous when I started fundraising running, so I started with a lower commitment. I wasn't sure how to do it. So I found a race where the commitment was \$500. That was something that I was comfortable with the network in my head, getting close to. I was comfortable with the assumptions I was making of what I would have to cover and just put my toe in the water. We have races, the

fundraising commitment is \$ 100. So if that sounds better than four, five, \$ 10,000 for you, maybe that's where you start and see how it goes and work your way up. Because the more you fundraise, the easier it gets, the more used to it. Just like the more miles you run, the easier it gets.

00:41:09

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. What I have found, and I've fundraised for TFK now for a couple races myself since I've been here, and I had done it before for Fred's team back in the day, is when you take your community along with you for your journey of training, and you start just showing them pictures from that training run, or sharing with them how you're feeling, or what your long run's gotten up to, things like that. They feel like they're going along with you for the marathon, and they feel invested that way, and that makes them want to support it.

And then they get those updates, and they start looking forward to race day, and they're like, " Oh, they're waking up." You want your donors to wake up on the morning of the race, wherever they are and be thinking about you and your race, right? And like, " Oh, how is Jeremie doing? How is Rob doing?" Maybe tracking you and seeing how it's going because they really want to see you succeed and achieve your goal. So I think that's the way to think of it is just creating a little community that is around you and your run. And I think that's the best case scenario. So great advice, Jeremie.

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Becs Gentry: A little newslettery blog situation.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, exactly. It's like you're running a little media business. It's really good. Jeremie, one thing that I think is so exciting with TFK is the new places that we're starting to go to. We've been doing, of course, New York, lots of different races in New York, the Marathon, Halfs, the Fibro series, and then there's the Abbott World Marathon Majors where we've been fortunate to get an increasing number of entries that includes Sydney now. So all of the other six cities are all part of TFK. But you just came back this weekend from Walt Disney World where we had our first ever Team for Kids team down there at all the Disney races from the 5K all the way up to the marathon. How was that?

00:43:06

Jeremie Kasmarcak: It was magical.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Of course.

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Jeremie Kasmarcak: Being a part of Team for Kids is being a part of such a specific community, but being in Disney is another very specific community. And it was so fun to see them mix and match. The people that I've known for years here in New York and know them in a very specific, I'm running the Majors, I'm collecting these stars ways, to see them dressed up as goofy to do a race was just so much fun. There was a lot of glitter and costumes and it was a lot more about the experience than the run. And I think that's a really great fit for a lot of people in our community. They're here for the community and the experience. This is a very low pressure, high fun race. I did the 5K. It was awesome. I was standing at that marathon finish line thinking, "Huh, maybe I'll do Dopey next year." I don't know if I'm really going to do it.

00:44:08

Rob Simmelkjaer: The Dopey challenge, by the way, which is running the 5K, 10K, half and marathon all on the same weekend.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah.

00:44:16

Jeremie Kasmarcak: Yep, back to back to back to back.

00:44:17

Becs Gentry: Which New York Road Runners' very own Randi Zuckerberg did, I believe.

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Jeremie Kasmarcak: Yeah.

00:44:21

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yes, that's right.

00:44:21

Becs Gentry: And Alex. Did Alex Egan do it too? I'm not sure if he did.

00:44:23

Jeremie Kasmarcak: Yeah, Alex did it. Yep.

00:44:23

Rob Simmelkjaer: Alex Egan, our chief development officer,

Jeremie's boss, he's got rubber legs, that guy. He can run all day every day. Really incredible.

00:44:30

Becs Gentry: He does. He just did 777 as well.

00:44:30

Rob Simmelkjaer: Exactly.

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Jeremie Kasmarcak: Yeah. Yes. I've had the pleasure of being at many finish lines that Alex and a lot of our TFK runners have crossed, but it was so much fun. It's fun to branch out. I was lucky enough to be in Sydney this year for that race. I was lucky enough to be in Tokyo to see a lot of our runners get their Six Star then. It's special. What we're able to do is special. In Tokyo, we had a lot of runners getting their Six Star and more than one, which I find absolutely unbelievable, told me the best part of running that race was seeing me catch them at the finish line. And I thought, "Absolutely not. You just got your Six Star." But we do everything we can to be there to support our runners no matter where the race is. We run around. I carry things for you. I'm going to carry all of your stuff post race. We're escorting you wherever we have access to go. And we're a community. You're not on your own when you're running with us.

00:45:35

Rob Simmelkjaer: All right. So let's talk about how someone can actually join a TFK team at this point. We're talking in mid-January. If someone's interested in running for Team for Kids, what are some opportunities that are currently open and available? Because we know how much demand there is obviously for the marathon, for lots of races. What are some openings right now?

00:45:59

Jeremie Kasmarcak: So right now, we are currently signing up runners for the Brooklyn Half. So RBC Brooklyn Half, we're open for that on our website, runwithtfk.org. We have interest lists for all the 27 Abbott World Marathon Majors. So you can email us at teamforkids@nyrr.org. We're starting our interest list. Those races won't open for registration until maybe October or November, so later this year. We will be opening for Queens, Bronx, and Staten Island, so the rest of the Five Borough series in the next couple of months. And as of yesterday, we have a 2027 Disney Marathon weekend interest list. So again, you can reach out to us at our email teamforkids@nyrr.org. It's literally me or four other

people who will be responding to you and we'll get you on the interest list. But right now, the only race that's first come first serve registration is the Brooklyn Half.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Which is an amazing race. So that's good for folks to know they can sign up right now to run Brooklyn with Team for Kids, Becs.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah, and exactly. I mean, there's also just a slight flex here on the fact that all the other races are pretty much full for this year. It's filled. It's successful in that respect. And you're looking ahead to 2027 of not just filling slots, but expanding the offerings for the kids, for the adults, for everyone. And Jeremie, with that in mind, obviously it's very, very fortunate and very wonderful and a huge success to see these sold out slots and to see full. But what else beyond that to you is successful for 2026 Team for Kids?

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Jeremie Kasmarcak: Yeah, it's funny when I started, this was not the case. I mean, we were hustling into August to fill marathon. So it's always surprising to me how popular running is right now and how strong the demand for races are. But for us, it's really happy runners. It's not that you met your fundraising and finished the race, it's that you had a good experience, you're coming back to the community and you're recommending us to other friends and family. We have so many people join us because their friend ran with us and said it's the only way to do this race. And we don't take that for granted. I am in the office on a daily basis trying and advocating for the best possible experience for Team for Kids Runners, because again, New York Road Runners doesn't have youth and community programs without Team for Kids Runners. This fundraising is at the heart of our mission delivery. So it's so important for us that Team for Kids is royalty for us. They're a big deal and I'm out there hustling to make sure you have the best experience possible.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: And Jeremie, let's just talk about the TCS New York City Marathon for a second. So we opened up Team for Kids signups for the 26th marathon right during the window of the 25 marathon and filled up pretty quickly. I know we've got an unreasonably long waiting list right now for the 26th marathon. So I think for most people listening now, probably not realistic to get in for 2026, right?

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Jeremie Kasmarcak: Correct. Yes. But I mean, if you're interested, get on the wait list. I mean, I've seen amazing things happen on wait lists. So if you really want it, try it, but the chances are slim at this point.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. But I think it's really important for someone who maybe would like a shot at running in 27 to think about running some other races potentially. Signing up for a Brooklyn Half or Queens to get that experience, get to know what it's all about at a lower stakes kind of a level, get to know Team for Kids, get the team to know you a little bit so that when the window opens for the 27 marathon this fall, you will be ready to go knowing when it's opening and be able to jump right on that.

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Jeremie Kasmarcak: Definitely. Especially if you're someone a little nervous about fundraising. For the Brooklyn Half, our fundraising is \$750. For Queens, Bronx and Staten Island, it's \$100. So those are more manageable price points depending on how you're addressing it. And you'll get to know us. You'll get your fundraising spiel down, you'll build out your tools. This year for the 26th TCS New York City Marathon, we opened the Sunday before race day. So with the kids' kickoff the Sunday before the marathon, that's when we opened. Not 100% certain because anything can happen, but it would likely be the same timeframe.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yes.

00:50:58

Jeremie Kasmarcak: Historically, we've opened on race day. This year, we opened a little bit early. I mean, we were full in two weeks. It happened very fast this year.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. And the kids' kickoff was a really appropriate day to launch because that was something that's supported by Team for Kids. 2,500 kids running in Central Park the week before-

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Becs Gentry: Ah, the best.

00:51:20

Rob Simmelkjaer: ... the marathon was really awesome. Jeremie,

nobody has a bigger impact at New York Road Runners and helping us do what we do. And so it's really a pleasure to have you on. Thanks for letting everybody get to know Team for Kids because it's such a huge part of what we are at New York Road Runners and thanks for everything you do.

00:51:40

Becs Gentry: Thank you.

00:51:41

Jeremie Kasmarcak: You're welcome. Thank you.

00:51:42

Rob Simmelkjaer: New York Road Runners is a nonprofit organization with a vision to build healthier lives and stronger communities through the transformative power of running. The support of members and donors like you helps us achieve our mission to transform the health and wellbeing of our communities through inclusive and accessible running experiences, empowering all to achieve their potential. Learn more and contribute at nyrr.org/donate. Well, Becs, that does it for another episode of Set the Pace. Want to thank our guest today, New York Road Runner's head of peer-to-peer fundraising and Team for Kids, Jeremie Kasmarcak. And before we wrap, if you want to see the Team for Kids journey in action, we have a video that follows Team for Kids member, Caroline Gonzalez, that's a great companion to this conversation. We'll put a link to that in the show notes, but Becs, it was a lot of fun talking about Team for Kids, and it's just such a unique and cool thing.

00:52:38

Becs Gentry: It's amazing. And every time I see one of those yellow, green, whichever color we want to call it, Team for Kids T-shirts, I just have such a smile on my face. And now, thanks to this conversation with Jeremie, I feel like I know in depth a lot more about what goes on to make TFK so successful, not just for the runners, but for all of those kids out there in New York and beyond.

00:53:06

Rob Simmelkjaer: Absolutely. Becs, if folks like the episode, they can go ahead, leave a rating, subscribe, leave us a comment so we can hear from you. Thanks for joining us. Enjoy the miles this week. We'll see you next week.