

Marathon Man

An interview with Steve Thorpe, local gardener and community champion.

Who or what motivated you to take up the challenge to run in the London Marathon this year? My mum had passed away in Manorlands; she had Leukemia and spent her last few weeks there. I had fairly bad depression after she died. I wasn't sleeping and went on to the internet and was looking at the marathon on the Sue Ryder website and clicked on the button to say that I was interested. I forgot all about it and a few weeks later I got an email notification saying "You are in our team!" And I thought, What team? I forgot all about it...Everyone at home was rolling around on the floor laughing when I told them...the thought of me running in the London Marathon! I felt committed then.

Have you been a runner in the past? I hadn't run for 35 years, since I left school. I used to run cross country but I hadn't done anything like that in a long time.

How did you prepare and train for the race?

In the New Year I set myself some targets. I looked at various plans they send you, a 16 week guide. I wasn't sure what level was right for me. In my third session I was surprised to do a 15 mile run. My initial idea was to run into Keighley where my son, Joe, was working and I thought he could drive me home if that was enough but I kept on going and made it to Airedale hospital; I thought if I collapse there I was in a good place, but I just kept going. I decided to do what my body told me. I also did lots on the all weather pitches. Gardening about 14 years a day helped too! I enjoyed training in the winter. **What were your biggest challenges?** My biggest challenge were my knees. A few weeks



I'd like to thank everyone for their support, sponsorship and encouragement. Everyone knows what a fantastic service Manorlands gives to the community. The Marathon was a way to say thank you. I'm grateful to have had the chance to be involved. - Steve Thorpe

into my training and I had a lot of bother with my right knee. I could hardly put any weight on it. I decided to do a lot of biking and I then went to see a physio and he sorted me out. Luckily it was fine on the day.

What was the result of your fundraising efforts, where did your support come from?

I'm up to nearly £5,200.00 and my target was £1,750. It was mostly from individuals. People who I never imagined would sponsor and help me did. And some people who I expected to get behind me didn't make as much of an effort. It was a bit of a roller coaster. Overall it was amazing and the support was just brilliant.

On a personal level, what were the main things you took away from the experience?

It gave me confidence, really. My confidence was low to begin with; I was feeling depressed and wasn't sure if I could do it. I'd never gone above 15 miles in my training. I can honestly say I enjoyed every single mile of it. I felt like I was walking on water. Going around, people were so encouraging. It was emotional at times because I was doing it for me mum. Running around I felt like a world champion. The streets were lined with people and they were shouting my name and the

kids were giving me high 5s. I'll never forget that. **Will you do it again?** I'm going to definitely do it when I am 60. That's my target. I hope to keep fit enough to do that.

What tips would you give others who are thinking of running the London marathon?

I'd tell them to just do it. It is just such an unbelievable experience. Don't over-face yourself with training. Listen to your body. If I can do it, anybody can do it. The whole experience was brilliant, honestly, the best in my life.

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