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Press Release

June 23, 2009

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For Immediate Release

(Grand Rapids, MI) Wheelchair bound athlete and long time friend will compete together in Saturday's Reeds Lake Run as part of training schedule for the 2009 Metro Health Grand Rapids Marathon.

East Grand Rapids residents Johnnie Tuitel and Brian Clay have set an ambitious goal; raise \$10,000 for charity and finish their first marathon together with Tuitel being pushed 26.2 miles in a wheelchair. Tuitel, who has cerebral palsy and has spent the majority of his life in a wheelchair, is no stranger to running. When he was younger he ran the Reeds Lake Run three times on crutches, but the feat took a toll on his body and shoulders. "I always wanted to finish a marathon, scratch it off my bucket list, but it never happened" Tuitel said.

The two friends got the idea to run a marathon after hearing about MyTeam Triumph, a local athletic ride-along program created for children, teens, adults and veterans with disabilities. Together, along with friends Rence Merideth and Bill Cuppie, Tuitel and Clay finished the 25k (15.5 miles) Fifth Third River Bank Run on Saturday May 9, 2009, crossing the finish line with a time of 2:46:50. "I know that pushing Johnnie for 26 miles is going to be a difficult task for my first marathon, going 10 more miles than the River Bank Run will be tough, but I'm inspired to achieve that goal for Johnnie," Clay said.

Tuitel is the founder of Alternatives in Motion, a local nonprofit organization that provides wheelchairs to individuals who do not qualify for other assistance, and who could not obtain such equipment without financial aid. Clay is a math teacher and assistant football coach at East Grand Rapids High School. Together the team will be training for the Grand Rapids Marathon in October and raising money for Alternatives in Motion and MyTeam Triumph. "We think this is an excellent opportunity to teach our kids the importance of giving back. We have two amazing charities that need support during these tough economic times, charities that are changing the lives of people with disabilities, it's important we get the community behind these two organizations," Tuitel said.

The two will be collecting pledges between now and October to support Alternatives in Motion and MyTeam Triumph. To make a donation to their efforts log onto: www.alternativesinmotion.org/marathon. Johnnie and Brian will start their 10K run at 8:45a.m. Saturday June 27, 2009 in East Grand Rapids. For more information please call Executive Director George Ranville at (616) 862-8018.

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