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Walker Kicks Off the Boston Marathon with Dave McGillivray

Walker Students and Staff were inspired by lessons from the BAA Race Director at the launch of the 2016 Team Walker Boston Marathon Challenge



Left to Right: Team Walker Boston Marathon runner Emily Thorndike, Team Walker Boston Marathon runner Karina Chmielewski, Race Director of the Boston Athletic Association's Boston Marathon Dave McGillivray, Team Walker Boston Marathon runner Dan Relihan and Team Walker Boston Marathon runner Alistair Phaup. (Team Walker Boston Marathon runners not pictured: Tess Alekna, Courtney Torres and Yunwen Zeng) / photo credit: Beacon High School

Needham, MA – On Monday, April 4, Walker, a non-profit leader in special education, behavioral health and residential treatment for children and families, hosted its annual Marathon Kick-Off Event. Special guest Dave McGillivray, Race Director of the Boston Athletic Association's Boston Marathon, joined students and staff at The Walker School to celebrate the charitable organization's 14th year participating in the Boston Marathon.

“It was such a pleasure to speak to the students at Walker,” said Dave McGillivray, Race Director of the Boston Athletic Association. “As I pulled into the school, I’m thinking to myself

how am I going to inspire and motivate these kids and then the opposite happens, they actually inspired me even more. What a very special place Walker is. I had no idea. I'm a huge fan now!"

During the Defining Moments presentation, McGillivray stressed the importance of continuing to fight for your dreams despite all possible obstacles, living a life that gives back to a greater purpose, and celebrating life's successes in all its shapes and forms. Bringing a Walker student onto the stage, McGillivray placed a medal around her neck and instructed her to return this award when she achieved her next goal, so as to pass it on to other children. He's given out 400 of these medals and received more than 300 back. McGillivray's message of courage and tenacity, especially in the face of adversity, was particularly poignant for the children on Walker's campus.

"We are grateful for the stories shared by Dave McGillivray, which taught Walker students and staff alike that patience, resilience, and determination are qualities necessary for tackling both the Boston Marathon and life's challenges alike," said Susan M. Getman, MSW, President and CEO of Walker. "We thank the Boston Athletic Association for the opportunity to participate in the marathon, and Dave for his passionate and inspiring presentation."

Walker staff, students, and supporters, along with seven Marathon runners, comprise *Team Walker*. Over the course of the following weeks, *Team Walker* shares their support for the Boston Marathon runners by completing the *Team Walker* Boston Marathon Challenge. The Challenge consists of running laps around the Needham Campus in an effort to accumulate 26.2 miles, or the equivalent of one marathon.

Dave McGillivray is a "professional with a purpose." From his extraordinary run across the U.S. to benefit the Jimmy Fund and Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in 1978 to serving as technical director then race director of the BAA Boston Marathon since the 1980s, McGillivray has helped organize more than 900 mass participatory events since founding DMSE, Inc. in 1981, while raising millions for worthy causes close to his heart.

This year, Walker received seven bib numbers from the John Hancock Non-Profit Marathon Program. The 2016 Walker Boston Marathon Team is led by seven runners, including:

- Tess Alekna, who lives in San Francisco, California, is running her second marathon and first Boston Marathon.
- Karina Chmielewski, a Winchester resident, is running in her fourth Boston Marathon.
- Alistair Phaup, a Brighton resident, is running the Boston Marathon for the first time.
- Dan Relihan, a Boston resident, is running his third Boston Marathon.
- Emily Thorndike, a Somerville resident, is running the Boston Marathon for the first time.
- Courtney Torres, a Westminister resident, is running her second marathon and first Boston Marathon.
- Yunwen Zeng, who lives in Shanghai, China, is running the Boston Marathon for the first time.

About Walker

Walker is a leading not-for-profit charitable organization providing intensive therapeutic and academic services for exceptionally vulnerable yet resilient children, teens, and families facing complex mental health, emotional, behavioral, and learning challenges. Founded in 1961, Walker's evidence-based programs positively impact nearly 20,000 children, teens, and families each year throughout Greater Boston, the North and South Shore as well as in Central Massachusetts. Walker provides services through campuses in Needham and Watertown, community-based clinical and youth development programs, professional seminars, consultations, and Walker staff embedded in public schools. For more information, visit walkercares.org or facebook.com/WalkerCares.

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