

Charity Warriors
by Koach Karl

This subject has come up in the monthly magazines numerous times in the past few years. Unfortunately, many of the articles written have a negative spin to them. I intend to change that here and NOW!

How on earth can you criticize people for challenging themselves AND helping others at the same time? It is beyond me but there have been a few who think these people are doing a bad thing. To give full disclosure, I was the coach for Leukemia & Lymphoma's Team In Training (TNT) program for nine years and now have my own group of charity runners called Runners In Touch (RIT) www.koachkarl.com. We raise money for a local charity called the Touched By Cancer Foundation www.touchedbycancerfoundation.org. Please donate!

During my years with TNT, I coached over two thousand people to their first marathon and most were former couch potatoes or at best novice runners. I also trained a dozen or so to their first Iron distance triathlon. Watching these people cross the finish line, who a year earlier only dreamed of such an accomplishment, made me more excited than when I complete such an event. The greatest part of charity endurance training is that you are not only helping yourself by becoming a stronger more determined individual but you are making a difference in someone else's life who truly needs you. Hence, I use the term "Charity Warrior."

To those people who would say that the Charity Warrior is slow or take up spaces that could be filled by "elite" athlete... all I can say is you are an IDIOT (I do tend to sugarcoat things, don't I?). First, as long as they finish within the required cutoff times, mind your own business. I am a strong believer in cutoff times and if ANYONE does not make it, he should be escorted off the course.

Second, there are truly very few "elite" athletes out there. If you are not placing in the top 10 or maybe 20, you are not an elite athlete, sorry to burst your bubble. We are all out there, in essence, competing against ourselves. Those true "elites" are given spots already, and it is usually first come first serve for us commoners. This is the way it should be! Finally, all of those "slow" people, which is a very subjective word as one man's run is another man's jog, are the ones footing most of the bill for the event. If we just held events for "elite" athletes, who the hell would pay for everything? 90% of the people out on the course are regular folks who work 40-60 hours per week and fit in their training.

Do the math: if you have a marathon with 10,000 participants and 5% are the "elite," which is high, that leaves 9500 regular folks like you and me. If the "elites" paid for their entry (average \$100), that would be \$5000, but the rest of us are worth \$950,000.

WHO is paying for this event? Even though I am a product of public school, I can figure that one out. Why is it so tough to appreciate these people as fellow competitors and leave it at that? In a marathon like San Diego Rock 'n' Roll, which usually has about 20,000 participant, about 5000 total charity runners participate—that is a staggering 25%! Of course, this will vary from event to event, but what difference does it make if one person is training on his own and trying to PR or if he trained with a group and is raising money for a good cause?

Breaking this down a little more, what kind of an impact do these people actually have? I will even lowball my figures. If there are 3000 Charity Warriors at an event and each of them raised \$2500 (a low estimate), that is \$7.5 MILLION going to various charities! Do you think that money is making a difference?! Damn right it does, and probably with something you as an individual are connected with is some way. Now that is just ONE event. Lowball this estimate for an annual impact by these pesky people. There are at least ten events that welcome Charity Runners and their causes. This does not account the smaller events spread all over the country. Charity Warriors' hard work and training accounts for about \$75 MILLION annually! I know that in today's world when the government is spending TRILLIONS, \$75 million does not sound like a lot, but to us common working people, that amount is INCREDIBLE! Over 10 years, Charity Warriors raise a minimum of \$750 MILLION. The next time you feel that these Charity Warriors are to slow or in your way, STOP and take a moment to think outside yourself and realize the REAL impact these people have on our society. Thank them for what they are doing.

I can almost guarantee that a family member or someone you know has been touched in some way by the great things these Charity Warriors have done over the years.

In this current economy, all charitable donations are down, so someone needs to take up the slack. With the bill that was passed making donations less tax deductible, this situation is going to get worse. If you do not know about this, you should! I think we all need to be supportive of these Charity Warriors because not only do they go out everyday and put in their training like others, but they are also constantly raising money and being an advocate for their particular cause. They really are doing much more than most people! They train and fundraise while also working and taking care of their family.

I know we have all heard people use the excuse "I don't have time," to get out of training for an even. Add fundraising to that, and maybe you can give these people the respect they deserve! That does not mean if you do not raise money and train you are any less dedicated, but by NO means does it mean these people should be treated like aliens invading your territory! You notice I did not use the term *illegal alien*, apparently that is no longer allowed as well as the term *terrorist*, isn't fascism swell, but I digress.

Remember that we are all out there busting our ass to get to the finish line, and we should respect each other for our common goal. Fund raising or not, we all put in the time and sweat to accomplish our goals. Enjoy the company of each person you come in contact with, and who knows, maybe we can not only be better athletes but grow as human beings as well. That last part was a little too touchy feely for me, but you know what I mean. Life is a class that is never over, learn from it.

GOD BLESS