

Runners hit pavement for fallen Airman

728th ACS relay team set to run in annual AF marathon

Eglin Air Force Base (Fla.) *Eagle*
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An eight-person-team from the 728th Air Control Squadron has teamed up to run in the annual U.S. Air Force Marathon Sept. 20, at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio .

The notable thing is they are running for the Benefit Account for Staff Sgt. Patrick Griffin's fund.

Griffin, 31, was killed in action May 13, near Diwaniyah, Iraq . He was a data systems technician assigned to the 728th ACS.

Joel Martin, from the 728th ACS, came up with the idea to raise money for the Griffin family after he joined the team.

"I thought it would be good for the family," Martin said, who is not only running the full marathon, but has a personal goal to see how far he can push himself.

In order to raise money for Griffin 's family, the team needs people to pledge or sponsor them per mile they train and run in the marathon for a one-time donation.

"People can give a flat donation or pledge per mile," said Nathaniel Bernardo.

But, he wants people to know that the team will be racking up a lot of miles during their training and during the marathon. In fact, the relay team can possibly total 800 miles by the end of the race.

"A penny-per-mile can easily turn into eight dollars," Bernardo said.

He also said people can pledge toward the entire team or an individual runner.

The team will participate in three different events: a four-person relay, a 5k run and the marathon.

Bernardo ran the marathon last year by himself and is glad to have a team for this year's event and having a cause makes it even better.

"Anything we can raise for the Griffin family will be nice," he said. "As of right now, we have over \$1,000 in pledges and donations coming in from L.A. County Sheriff's Department and as far as Japan and South Korea ."

The Air Force Marathon organizer, along with BearingPoint Inc., the primary sponsor of the marathon, have tamed up to sponsor SSgt. Griffin's Marathon/Relay Team by picking up the entry fee. Also, local businesses have donated their services to provide uniforms for the entire team. "We're hoping Team Eglin and the community around the base will provide us with great support for our cause," Bernardo concluded.

For more information about making a donation, or sponsoring a runner or the team, contact Wendy Hodges at 651-2285 or Niel Bernardo as 609-8041. Or visit the Web site at <http://members.cox.net/niel4ansic/griffin.htm>.