

MAINLAND JOURNAL

YOUR NEWSPAPER OF RECORD

Vol. 129, No. 39

Wednesday, September 24, 2008 | An edition of THE DAILY JOURNAL

Fifty cents

Serving Absecon, Egg Harbor Township, Linwood, Northfield, Pleasantville and Somers Point

Third annual Zach's Run will raise money for Hunter Syndrome research

By **ROBIN BUEHLER**
Staff Writer

Chris and Cheryl Dearth received news no parent wants to get.

Their son Zachary was diagnosed with Hunter Syndrome, a genetic disease for which there is no known cure.

"It was devastating," Chris Dearth said.

Hunter Syndrome — also known as Mucopolysaccharidosis Type II — affects the body's ability to break down cell waste. It interferes with the functions of certain cells, leading to serious complications.

Zachary, who is in first grade, was diagnosed as the

result of a doctor's appointment in 2005.

The doctors became concerned when the youngster, only 3 at the time, had a hard time "going under" with anesthesia. They also were concerned about the flexibility in his neck, Chris Dearth said.

Doctors told the Dearths to take Zach to see a geneticist, who ultimately made the diagnosis.

Equally frustrating for the family was the fact that researchers haven't put much focus on finding a cure.

"There was no organization that focused on just his disease," said Chris Dearth, who grew up in Somers

Point but now lives in Freedomia, N.Y.

Consequently, the couple — thanks to support from their families — created Making Precious Strides Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to generating awareness of Hunter Syndrome in South Jersey, raising money for research and providing families affected by it with financial aid for medical expenses, therapy

and treatment.

The organization next month will hold its third annual Zach's Run, a 5K race and one-mile fun walk, to raise money for its efforts.

The event will be Oct. 4, rain or shine, at 6th Street and the Boardwalk in Ocean City. This year's event will include additional activities for kids, including a moon bounce, inflatable slides and a Tot Trot.

IF YOU GO

The third annual Zach's Run will be held Oct. 4 in Ocean City. Registration begins at 7:30 a.m. and the race is at 9 a.m. The cost is \$20 in advance or \$25 the day of the event. Proceeds go toward research for Hunter Syndrome. For more information, go to www.zachsrun.org or www.makingpreciousstrides.org.

The event has drawn nearly 400 participants each year, and it has raised about \$50,000, part of which has been through a donation provided by Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

"It's been a big success," Dearth said.

Following the race, Making Precious Strides Inc. will hold a special check presentation donating proceeds from last year's event to representatives from two medical research centers currently working on a cure for Hunter Syndrome — North Carolina Children's Hospital at the University of North Carolina and Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.



Submitted photo

Zachary Dearth and his younger sister, Abigail, posed for this shot before the first day of school.