



Bryan Longenbaker of Worthington is congratulated by his Heart and Sole teammates after crossing the finish line at the Ohio Health Capital City Half Marathon in downtown Columbus on April 29. BARBARA J. PERENIC/COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Heart in motion

Columbus nonprofit, champions race to push past struggles

Vicki Potter's legs cannot keep up with daughter Abby's need for speed. Actually, no one's can. When 99% of your life is lived in relative slow motion, that other 1% is like flying on a magic carpet.

Or, in this case, in a customized adult jogging stroller.

"She yells, 'Go mama, go!' She can't go fast enough," Vicki said of her 21-year-old's excitement as they whisk along Ohio roadways — mother running and pushing, daughter delighting in every second of it.

The Potters are part of Team Heart and Sole, a Columbus-area nonprofit organization established in 2014 to help children and adults with physical and cognitive disabilities experience the thrill and triumph of competing in road running and trail races and events. Able-bodied "teammates," who often are parents, push, run and walk with the "champions."

Abby, who developed cerebral palsy after suffer-



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ing a brain accident before turning 2, is among those affiliated with Team Heart and Sole who cannot compete on their own. Teammates take turns getting their champion across the finish line, a distance that can be fairly near or relatively far away. Most races are 5Ks, but a handful of Team Heart and Sole members competed in the Cap City Half Marathon on April 29.

The volunteers perform acts of compassion that result in a few hours of life-changing moments. If not angels, they at least provide

the mini-miracle of making those who are "not typical," as Vicki Potter so sensitively puts it, feel they fit in. And that is huge for those with cerebral palsy, have been diagnosed with autism, have Down syndrome, are blind or otherwise physically or mentally "different" in other ways.

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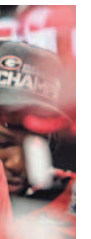
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