

[feel good]

a story to inspire you...

BOB MCGUIRE SIXTY YEARS AND GOING STRONG

By Bettina Marks

As His 60th birthday approaches, McGuire runs to raise \$60,000 in Celebration of UCPN's 60th anniversary.

"I'm just a link in the chain," says Bob McGuire, director of the United Cerebral Palsy Association of Nassau County (UCPN) in Roosevelt. For 25 years, he's been passionate and efficient in running one of the County's largest employers (800 employees) and one of the few facilities of its kind that attracts, not only local "consumers" but those from other regions challenged by disabilities.

Born in the Bronx, McGuire grew up with a dad who had "a bum leg like FDR," and learned early on about the courage of those with disabilities. "These people are entitled to and want the same things that everybody wants—those inalienable rights as human beings," says McGuire. "Today, there are still significant obstacles," he says. "Basic transportation needs, housing, employment and access to medical and therapeutic services are concerns. The severity of the individual's disability impacts how much can be achieved to improve their lives."

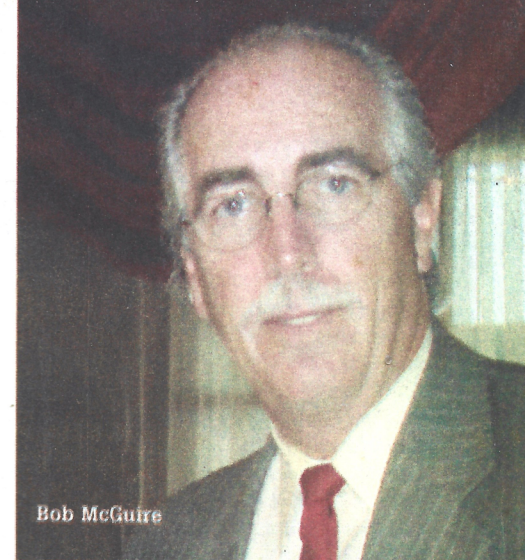
As a hands-on leader, who began his career as a coordinator of residential services directly overseeing the needs of those with disabilities, McGuire does a "walk-

through" of the facilities twice daily where he may observe a therapy, chat with a consumer (child or adult) or staff member. He's visible and accessible, and has a pulse on the entire operation.

However, during the 60s, McGuire admits that it took him a while to get through school, eventually graduating while in his late twenties. He shares this personal note not only in this interview, but also with his staff, as a motivational anecdote. "You can't do anything about yesterday, but you can do something about tomorrow."

In fact, McGuire's "keep on truckin'" philosophy is powering his preparation for two upcoming events: In March he takes the plunge (again) for the Polar Bear Swim in Oyster Bay, which helps raise funds for UCPN and generates fun for friends willing to do something unique for an important cause. On May 4th, he'll run the 2008 Long Island Half-Marathon (13.1 miles) along with UCPN staff members, friends and others from the community. His goal is to raise \$60,000 for the organization while commemorating the 60 years of his life (April 25th) that also coincides with the 60-year anniversary of UCPN's founding.

Raising funds fuels technology, and technology, McGuire notes,



Bob McGuire

has greatly improved lives. The allocation of resources at UCPN including computers, power wheel chairs and augmentative communication for students who are non-verbal but can communicate through devices that give them a voice, has helped facilitate independence, and in turn foster self-esteem. "A parent of a young adult consumer here told us that even though his son was not able to speak, he felt he was always able to communicate non-verbally with him," McGuire explains.

"When his son got an augmentative communication device, this dad told us of the unimaginable joy he experienced upon hearing his son say, 'Dad, I love you!'"

As McGuire trains for these upcoming, physically challenging fundraisers, he notices more aches and pains as he approaches 60 (his knees are bothering him), yet, he understands how small his pains are and takes a grateful breath in appreciation. "You also have to like what you do," he says. ☐

Bettina Marks is both a health and fitness advocate and writer/producer who frequently contributes to Newsday.



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