



Celebrating 25 Years of Running and Walking in 2009

Run/Walk Fundraiser for Jason Baird Set for December 3rd in Mississauga, ON

**Lawnmower Explosion in July Leaves Former Mississauga Reps
Hockey Player with Third-Degree Burns over more than 60% of His Body**

MISSISSAUGA, ON-Nov. 17, 2008 — The Running Room will host a run/walk early next month to benefit a promising athlete whose life was terribly affected by a lawnmower explosion.

The run/walk for the *Jason Baird Family Trust Fund* on Wednesday, December 3, 2008 takes place at 6:30 p.m. at 2969 Argentia Road at Winston Churchill.

Jason Baird played hockey for the Mississauga Reps as a teenager in the mid 1990s. After six years in the Central Hockey League, the Akron Ohio Steelhounds player had just been signed with the Muskegon Fury in Michigan (now the Muskegon Lumberjacks) of the International Hockey League six days before his life took a tragic turn.

While working for a landscaping company to supplement his hockey income, he suffered third-degree burns over more than 60 per cent of his body when the mower he was riding exploded July 17, 2008. Because it wasn't during hockey season, Jason had no medical insurance coverage. He spent three months in critical care in Ohio at the Akron Hospital Burn Unit with Bethany, his wife, at his side. Their children have been in the care of Jason's family in Cayuga, Ontario. A long series of painful surgeries was finally completed in mid-September.

"It is a Running Room tradition to host a run/walk to benefit a local charity when we open a new store," said Running Room founder John Stanton. "When Jason Baird's story came to our attention, we felt that our store opening event could provide a way to unite people in the spirit of peace, love and goodwill to help Jason Baird and his family who have undergone more than any family should ever have to bear."

In mid-October, Jason finally got to go home. His daily routine requires a visit to the Akron hospital for six hours of rehab, a 90 minute dressing change by Bethany at home and then more stretching therapy at home to keep his skin from getting too tight. Due to the risk of infections, his surroundings must be absolutely sterile. Jason has been fitted for a facemask and pressurized body wear that he will wear for at least a year to reduce the amount of scarring. A long, challenging, costly road lies ahead.

Long-time Mississauga resident, realtor Linda Pinizzotto is collaborating on the *Jason Baird Run/Walk* and has also created a website - jasonbaird.ca - to raise funds for Jason and provide information about his tragic situation. Pinizzotto, the former General Manager of the Stoney Creek Spirit Junior B Hockey Team in the Ontario Hockey Association and a Member of the Board of Directors of the Mississauga Real Estate Board, has taken a very deep personal interest in Jason Baird's tragedy. Jason lived with Pinizzotto's family when he was a teenager, while playing hockey with her son for the Mississauga AAA Reps of the Greater Toronto Hockey League.

"My family has stayed in touch with Jason and his Cayuga, Ontario based family over the last 12 years," said Pinizzotto. "I have watched Jason advance in his professional hockey career, get married, and have a family of his own. What happened to Jason is a tragedy that could happen in any of our families. I am asking every past and present hockey family and all families to unite in the spirit of the Holiday Season. Jason is one of our own who is far away and in need of our help."

No special athletic skills are needed to participate in the ***Jason Baird run/walk***; only a deep sense of caring about another human being is required. The event will begin at 6:30 p.m. at the new Running Room/Walking Room at 2969 Argentia Road at Winston Churchill in Mississauga. Entry is \$10 and 100% of the fee goes to the *Jason Baird Family Trust Fund*

All participants get a medal as well as great food and refreshments after the run/walk.

People can read the full story and register to run or walk at www.events.runningroom.com or make an online tax-deductible donation now at www.giving.runningroom.com.

John Stanton founded the Running Room in one room of an old Edmonton house shared with a hairdressing shop almost a quarter century ago. Today there are close to 100 Running Room locations across Canada and in the United States. The company helps to organize, promote and support more than 600 walks and runs that raise millions of dollars for charities and non-profit organizations annually. Today Stanton spends much of his time motivating thousands of people to get fit through running and walking.

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Media contact for the *Jason Baird Run/Walk Fundraiser*:

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Editor's Note:

We would appreciate it if you could pass this event information along to those in your organization in charge of Coming Events and PSAs. Newspapers may download a sheet of various sized drop-in ads for their free use from www.events.runningroom.com. Click on Jason Baird Run Walk. The link is in the "Details" section.