

**TEAM SPOTLIGHT: CPL. KYLE SCHNEIDER & THE 'FREEDOM TEAM'  
WRITTEN BY CHRISTOPHER HENDERSON FOR THE SENECA7**

For one Seneca7 team, the race will be filled with challenge, reward – and symbolism.

The 'Freedom Team' consists of family and friends of Cpl. Kyle Schneider, a Baldwinsville-area Marine who was killed in Afghanistan June 30, 2011.

"Kyle loved to run," says his mother, Lorie Schneider. "He ran track in high school. When he was stationed in Washington, DC he would run to the National Mall to see the sunrise, and take runs around Arlington to pay respect to those brave men and women who gave all."

Kyle's annual visits home always included a special trip around Seneca Lake, she recalls.

"He loved Seneca Lake. The beauty of it – our family drives around it filled with laughter and fun, lunches at restaurants, fishing trips with his Dad and brother, watching sunsets – Seneca Lake was one of his favorite places."

"Shortly after Kyle's Angel date we decided that we had to carry on his mission for him, to continue to help his fellow Military brothers, community and country," Kyle's mother remembers. "We knew that we had to do something that he so loved: running. We decided to create the Cpl. Kyle R. Schneider Foundation and the Freedom Team."

A foundation was born.

The first function for the Freedom Team was the Festival of Races in Syracuse on September 30, 2012. Lorie Schneider walked the 3K, while local Marines, as well as Marines from Kyle's unit, ran the 5K. They were joined by friends, family and community members who did either the 5K run or 3K walk to honor and remember Kyle.

Kyle's parents and family goal is to keep their son's name alive – and to help someone everyday in his honor and memory.

"The Freedom Team consists of anyone who has the desire to run any race at any level, and while doing so honor and remember Kyle and also those brothers/sisters in arms that have fought and died for our freedom," Kathy explains. "Let them never be forgotten!"

When Kathy heard about the Seneca7 she knew it was a race the Freedom Team needed to do. She began training, determined to make up one part of the seven-member team that would run 77 miles, encircling Seneca Lake, in her son's memory.

“I have never run before,” Kathy admits. “I am not even sure if I enjoy it, to be honest. But something deep in my heart knew it was something I must do. Create a team to run this race for him, and also become a part of the team.”

In December Kathy joined a local half marathon running group in the hopes of preparing for the run. She quickly realized the ability level of other members surpassed her own, so she started reading books about running, and running on her own.

“Kyle is with me every run. My goal was just running one mile without stopping, and I did it. Kyle could run fast, and for ten miles easily at a time, so I am inspired to try to do so, too.”

Kathy admits to trepidation about her own preparations for the race.

“I’m not sure if I will ever run fast, but there are Freedom Team members that can and do. In October 2012, one ran the Marine Corps Marathon in Kyle's honor. It started and ended near Arlington where Kyle is now laid to rest.”

That man will make up one-seventh of the Seneca7 Freedom Team – and Kathy is determined to be ready for the race, as well.

“When I run for Kyle, I run with a purpose,” she says. “I feel his passion for running, and his passion for his country. I run with my heart filled with love, respect, appreciation, gratefulness and sorrow for my brave beloved son, who laid his life down for his country, his brothers in arms and his family, and for all those that have sacrificed for freedom. We are home of the free because of our brave. The other members of the Freedom Team express to me that running in memory of Kyle gives them a feeling that they know that they will finish because they will have an Angel with them.

That the backdrop will be one of her son’s favorite places only makes the experience sweeter.

“We will run around Seneca Lake. A lake with so many beautiful memories. Memories of a family, memories of a boy who became a Marine, of a man who so loved his country that he gave his life for freedom. Kyle will be smiling down on us as we take every step. This race is for him; every step, every breath, every beautiful sight we see, every pain that we will feel, every struggle that we will encounter, every smile, every cheer. This is for Kyle.”

“As I run the Seneca7, because of our family's connection to this lake, I will run with tears,” she says. “Tears of joy of being the one chosen to be called his 'Mama.' Tears of pride. Tears of memories of laughter and fun. And tears of sorrow: sorrow for the wedding and grandchildren that will not be; sorrow of the hugs and laughter I so miss; and sorrow for the runs that Kyle will only have now through me.”

“The Seneca7 is a journey with a purpose for the Freedom Team,” she says. “Seneca Lake is our lake. We may place last, but no matter where we finish, this race is ours, and in our hearts we will have the heart to finish with an Angel beside us.



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