

A mountainous tribute in Hopkinton



Zoom

A sneaker tree in memory of Meg Menzies shares the space in front of Weston Nurseries with the 2006 Marathon sculpture by Mico Kaufman.
Daily News Staff Photo / Allan Jung

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HOPKINTON – The huge, colorful pile of used running shoes is sure to catch the attention of many near the 1-mile mark of the Boston Marathon - and that's the point.

The shoes came in from all around the world – Germany, Austria, Canada and almost all 50 states. They're neatly stacked on a 15-foot pole in the shape of a tree.

Cedar Street resident Kel Kelly, who is running the Marathon this year, came up with the idea to pay tribute to Meg Cross Menzies, a 34-year-old Virginia woman killed Jan. 13 by an alleged drunken driver while training for the famous 26.2 mile race.

Menzies was married and a mother of three.

As a mother of four, Kelly, 51, was compelled to do something after hearing the story about Menzies and seeing her family photos on Facebook.

"The only thing I could think about was the fact that a month ago these three young children had a perfect life and now they don't have their mom," Kelly said. "I felt there was something I could do for her and her family."

The structure is made of 388 pairs of running shoes that Kelly collected for more than a month. Six volunteers helped build the tribute on Sunday.

"They are still coming in," Kelly said. "There could be up to 1,000 pairs before the Marathon."

Each pair has a story, Kelly said.

One little girl from Virginia wrote on a kids-size pair: "For my friend's mom, Meg."

The tribute is located on the property of Weston Nurseries on Rte. 135 near the Spirit of the Marathon statue at the 1-mile mark. They originally wanted to build it at the start line, but security measures prevented it, Kelly said.

Weston Nurseries staff helped place the pole and base of the structure.

"We put it in a spot where people training will see it and the people running the Marathon, of course," said Peter Mezitt, president of the nursery.

Mezitt said he was glad to be part of the tribute and thinks the structure is a way to promote road safety. "Running is more dangerous than ever with distracted driving," he said.

"Everyone has felt the same vulnerability about possibly being in an accident," Kelly said.

Kelly will be running her third Boston Marathon with her wife Virginia Pitcher and her 23-year-old daughter, Julia McGovern. They are committed to raising \$15,000 for the House of Possibilities, a nonprofit in Easton that works with adults and children with cognitive and physical disabilities.

"I had given up on running for a couple of years," she said. "But I was so moved by what transpired around the bombing. I felt like I needed to run one more."

Kelly said the Marathon will be emotional, especially passing the running shoe tribute.

"I'm pretty sure I'll cry," she said. "I think my heart will be with her husband, Scott, who is now running the Marathon in her place."

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