

ACROSS THE STATE RELAY

Helping the community has always been a priority for Florida State University athletics and under the leadership of fourth-year head coach Bob Braman, community service and charity donations have become a staple of the Seminole cross country program. In 2003, the Seminoles conducted their third annual "Across the State Relay."

The "Across the State Relay" is a 13-hour, 140-mile trek that is more than a training and team-building exercise but a chance for the team, men and women, to give something back to the community. Each of over 40 runners, is asked to raise \$140 through sponsorships from their high school coaches, families, friends and former employers at a dollar-per-mile.

"We thought this would provide a little more motivation for the athletes, and a great thing for the program," Braman said. "We bring the money from all over the country, if you will, into Tallahassee for good causes. It's a good team building event—the kids get to rally behind something together."

Racing in pairs, the team maintains a competitive pace of about 10 miles per hour. From Yankeetown, which is just north of Crystal River, the pairs run across the peninsula through small towns, back roads and forested scenery in light traffic areas, in four to eight-mile increments. The runners are accompanied by two chase vans throughout the course of the relay. The final leg has the runners dip their water bottle into the Atlantic Ocean at Daytona Beach. Joining them at the end of the journey are the remaining members of the team who then dive into the ocean.

In the past, the event has raised approximately \$7,000 for charities such as the United Way, the Dick Howser Center for Childhood Services Inc., the Red Cross's September 11th Relief Fund and Capital City Youth Services. This year the Seminoles raised over \$5,000 for the United Way of the Big Bend for distribution to multi-sclerosis charities.

One of the organizations that benefit from the event is the Dick Howser Center, named after the former FSU baseball coach, is a nonprofit agency dedicated to providing services for children and individuals with disabilities and their families. The Howser Center began operation in 1974 as a small parent group in Tallahassee and now serves most communities in the Big Bend area. To date, the agency operates developmental preschool centers in Gadsden, Leon, Jefferson and Wakulla counties.

These centers are licensed childcare facilities that offer developmental intervention as well as therapy and other

healing arts services. In addition, the Howser Center offers community based support such as respite care and personal care assistance for both children and adults with developmental disabilities. The Leon Center, located at 240 Mabry Street in Tallahassee, can be reached at 850/574-3906.

Another past beneficiary was the Capital City Youth Services is a non-profit shelter in Tallahassee that provides a nurturing home primarily for runaway children and teens. In addition, it offers services to youths who have been victims of abuse or who are in other troublesome situations. CCYS also provides an extensive counseling program to the youth that they serve as well as the families that they come from. The center serves over 1,000 young people a year from Leon County and the surrounding counties.

Braman started the event in 1981 as president of the Tampa Bay Runners' Club then took it to the University of South Florida. Upon assuming the head-coaching job at FSU, Braman changed the relay into a charitable event.



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