

# ACROSS THE STATE RELAY



**H**elping the community has always been a priority for Florida State University athletics and under the leadership of sixth year head coach Bob Braman, community service and charity donations have become a staple of the Seminole cross country program. In 2004, the Seminoles conducted their fourth 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 the 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,” said head coach Bob Braman. “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.

The team raised over \$7,000 during this year’s “Across the State Relays” and decided to donate it to the American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund, which set up shelters and provided assistance to those who were affected by Hurricane Charlie and Frances.

“It’s great that this year our student-athletes chose the American Red Cross to help the hurricane victims,” said Braman. “We felt like if we could help a little in what was going on around us then the race would take on extra significance. The hurricanes really hit home for some of the runners on the team and this was one way the team felt they could contribute.”

In the past, the event has raised approximately \$12,000 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.

The Dick Howser fund, a past beneficiary which is 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 Leon, Gadsden, Jefferson and Wakulla counties. 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, which 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.

