

# J.P.'s Foundation focuses on the needs of local children

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**A GIVING SPIRIT** — A check for \$20,000 was presented to the Saints Peter & Paul Parents Guild. Pictured, back row, from left: Jason Reid, Tim Tilley, Dave Whittemore, Bob Brunner and Saints Peter & Paul Catholic School Principal Patrick Reister. Front row: Dave Paulus, Father Patrick O'Keefe, Brian Attea and Jay Gimlin. Photos by Ron Larson.

**HAMBURG** — The Kyle Reid Memorial Scholarship 5K run was held in Hamburg for 12 years, in memory of a young man who died of cancer.

Three years ago, the Reid family handed over the reins to the board of directors of the J.P.'s Foundation.

Robert Brunner, the owner and president of J.P. Fitzgerald's Inc., said that he had been holding ongoing conversations about keeping the run in Hamburg, with local individuals like Brian Attea of Attea & Attea P.C.

“Once we decided to have the run, we needed a purpose,” Brunner said. In part, the Kyle Reid 5K had benefitted the parent guild at Saints Peter & Paul Catholic Church, and Brunner said that he wished to continue that relationship.

“I will always want to help the kids at Saints Peter & Paul,” he said. “We are trying to benefit them the best that we can.”

The J.P.’s Foundation members put their heads together to find a main purpose for their run. “We kept saying that there had to be something that would touch a nerve and relate to people,” Brunner said. “When the word ‘autism’ was mentioned – bang! Stop everything. That’s it.”

Brunner said that the board noticed a lack of local runs for autism and subsequently selected Autism Services Inc. as its main proceeds recipient. “We are what Susan G. Komen® is for breast cancer,” Brunner added.

A 5K expert was brought in, to help the board of directors plan the newly-dubbed Run the ’Burg. “We were told that, with any new run that’s established, to expect about 200 people,” Brunner said. “If you can get 500, pat yourselves on the back.”

During the first run date, three years ago, 1,300 individuals came out to participate. “It beat every expectation that was out there,” Brunner said.

More than 1,500 joined the run this year, in early June. “It has become very large because of the board, which is made up of good people; because of the cause and because of our sponsors,” Brunner said.

“When you attach your name to top-notch companies and individuals, that really helps,” he added. “Our cause is autism; we are focused on autism.”



CHECK IT – Veronica Federioni (center) of Autism Services accepted a check for \$50,000 from J.P.'s Foundation.

The Reid family members were the run's honorary starters, this year. "The run kept going because of this family," Brunner said. "They are some very special people."

Brunner said that the board is appreciative of the community members who turned out for the Run the 'Burg. "We really showcased our beautiful village to Western New York," he said. Runners from all over the state and some from Pennsylvania participated, this year. "This is not a village event," Brunner added. "This is a Western New York event. We are accomplishing multiple things, by hosting this event."

The runners and walkers made their way through the closed-off streets of the village of Hamburg. The event also included a theme auction with more than 150 baskets, a beer tent, live music, dunk tanks, bounce houses, food and ice cream. "It was set up like a carnival," Brunner said. "It filled up the whole J.P. [Fitzgerald's] parking lot."

This year's event raised \$50,000 for Autism Services and \$20,000 for Saints Peter & Paul. "So far, in three years, \$180,000 has been given away to our local children," Brunner said. "That's incredible."

Brunner said that the foundation's goal is to make Autism Services more local to the WNY community. "We are already working on locations and they are slowly expanding their services," he said. "We want a house in the village. I think that would be great."

He said that the foundation's 100 percent volunteer board is working on next year's run and has already held its kickoff meeting. "Our ultimate goal is to outgrow this location," he said. "The bottom line is, what can we do to help those who need help now?"

He said that the board's goals for next year are to seek out additional sponsors, raise more money and realize its goal of 2,000 race participants.

"If we get aggressive, I think we can do it," he said. "If people understand the magnification of this event, I see nothing but upsides to the coming years."

People can already get involved in next year's run. "Volunteer to help on the race day. Talk about it. Get people to join the race. Run or walk," Brunner said. "Remember that this is our kids and our community. That is where the money is going."

Next year's event will be held on Saturday, June 7. "It's infectious," Brunner said. "Everyone that comes into contact with it wants to be a part of it."

He thanked the run's major sponsors, who "have stuck with us from day one. They've believed in us and they have seen results."

Those large corporate sponsors included US Foods, J.P. Fitzgerald's, Labatt Brewing Company, Pella Windows & Doors, Baillie Lumber Co., Try-It Distributing, Towne BMW and Hilbert College.

"We are working hard," Brunner added. "We believe in what we are doing. When you know you are supporting the right cause, you can't lose. It's all about helping the kids."

The board of directors is made up of Brunner, Attea, David Paulus CPA, Jay Gimlin, Jason Reid, James Tilley and Dave Whittemore.

For more information about the run or foundation, visit [www.jpFOUNDATION.org](http://www.jpFOUNDATION.org) or call 512-2500. Registration for next year's event is currently open. Sign up online or in person, on the day of the event.

The 23rd annual J.P.'s Green Jacket Open/Golf for Autism will be held on June 2 at the Springville Country Club. For more information about this event, visit [www.jpFOUNDATION.org/golf](http://www.jpFOUNDATION.org/golf).