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SJS Survivor Running in Fox Cities Half-marathon

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By Emily Matesic

The Community First Fox Cities Marathon is less than two weeks away.

Thousands of people will be pounding the pavement in five events on race weekend, but for one Menasha woman, running the half-marathon is a goal she set for herself after overcoming a near-death experience.

Looking at Kendra Schmidt running today, one would have never guessed just three years ago her life was in jeopardy.

After taking a prescription medication, she came down with a rash that turned into Stevens Johnson Syndrome, or SJS -- a severe allergic reaction.

"I was at the hospital for a couple of days, and then before I knew it I was being transferred to the regional burn center at St. Mary's in Milwaukee, where I spent three months."

SJS Caused Schmidt's body to blister both inside and out.

She lost about 95-percent of her skin and was in a medically-induced coma and on a ventilator.

The prognosis wasn't good.

"Thirty to 40 percent of all people who have SJS don't survive," she said.

- [Learn more about SJS at the Stevens Johnson Syndrome Foundation web site](#)

But Schmidt did survive, and just days after being released from the hospital, she cheered on her sister-in-law who was competing in the 2008 Fox Cities half-marathon.

"My husband pushed me around, kind of around the route in different areas to see her walk the half-marathon,

and I looked at my husband and I said I'm going to do that next year."

It was a long road to recovery. After learning how to walk again and then run, Schmidt completed the marathon weekend's 5k race in 2009, and last year she ran the half marathon with SJS survivors from around the country.

This year they're doing it again.

"we're all pretty pumped and excited that we're all going to be together, and the healing process that happens when you're with somebody that's been through what you have, especially when it's as rare as they say it is, that in itself is huge."

A huge accomplishment for a small group who overcame so much.



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