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Weston Ironman's Biggest Win was for the Children's Tumor Foundation

BY STACEY BOMSER

Weston resident Heath Eskalyo is a member of an elite class of athletes. He recently completed the 2017 Ironman Championship in Kona, Hawaii. In addition to finishing a 2.4 mile swim, 112 mile bike ride and 26.2 mile run, he raised more than \$42,000 to help the Children's Tumor Foundation find a cure for neurofibromatosis.

This was not Eskalyo's first Ironman. He's previously completed the Florida Ironman, as well as several 70.3 Triathlon events. "To complete an Ironman means you are in an elite club. The Hawaii Ironman is a whole other level! It is like being in the Super Bowl," he explains.

Eskalyo acknowledges training for the Ironman Championship was no easy task, but he says Weston is an ideal location. "The city offers clean, smooth and wide bike lanes. The city even recently installed new traffic lights for cyclists. There are also great sidewalks for running and numerous parks and athletic facilities to swim and strength train."

Throughout his training Eskalyo was not alone. He was part of the Children's Tumor Foundation's NF Endurance Team. His team captain was eight-year-old Bella Paesano, who was diagnosed with neurofibromatosis 1 (NF1). Bella and her family flew to Hawaii to cheer on Eskalyo as he competed in the Ironman race.

"They were out on the race course giving me high fives," shares Eskalyo, noting that Bella was there to greet him as he passed the finish line. He finished the 140.6 mile race in 13 hours, 48 minutes and 1 second.



Heath Eskalyo with Team Captain Bella Paesano.

Eskalyo says Bella is the true hero. "Bella faces her diagnosis with resilience, courage and bravery every day. She was truly inspiring to me as my Team Captain and helped me surpass our fundraising goals. To be able to increase awareness and raise funds to fight such a terrible disease was an honor."

According to Eskalyo, the Children's Tumor Foundation began as the first grassroots organization dedicated to finding treatments for neurofibromatosis (NF) and a model for innovative research endeavors. "As of right now, there is no cure for NF. The Children's Tumor Foundation NF Endurance Team gives participants like me the opportunity to swim, bike and run – or all three – in endurance events across the

country. Over the past three years, the NF Endurance Team has raised more than \$4 million to help fund research."

Although the Ironman race may be over, Eskalyo says he plans to continue his involvement with the Children's Tumor Foundation, as well as the other charities in which he is involved. He also intends to "eat all the foods I put on hold for the past year, and spend more time with family and friends, as the training schedule was insane!"