

For Immediate Release

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A Local Holiday Tradition Reaches the Soles of Combat Boots

Over 9,000 runners expected in Bethesda and Afghanistan for the Annual Turkey Chase

Bethesda, MD, November 22, 2011 – During the holidays, children and adults alike find solace in family traditions that have been passed down through the generations. Thanksgiving morning is one such holiday that brings with it many different traditions. While some are putting turkey in the oven or nestled on the couch watching the Macy's Day Parade, community members of all demographics are making their way to downtown Bethesda to run, connect, and celebrate the spirit of giving at the Annual Turkey Chase.

Created by YMCA Bethesda-Chevy Chase 29 years ago, countless families have made the Turkey Chase an annual tradition to be carried on for years to come. This year, the event takes on a whole new meaning for one local family who finds themselves separated by deployment. Lt. Col. Eduardo Monarez of the United States Air Force started running the Turkey Chase with his wife four years ago, and it has since become a highly-anticipated event for his wife and kids. He is now deployed in Kabul, Afghanistan, but has not let that impede on his family's irreplaceable tradition. He has organized a team of US military personnel who will run the 10K race as it is happening in Bethesda, MD. "While I can't be home this year, at least now I can still participate in the Turkey Chase here while Susan, Bella and AJ participate back home," expresses Lt. Col. Monarez.

In its 29th year, the Turkey Chase is the largest race in Montgomery County, MD and the signature charity event of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rotary Club and the YMCA Bethesda-Chevy Chase. The race has grown from 300 runners in 1982 to 8,500 participants last year ranging in age from 0 to 85. Thousands of dedicated runners come together every year in support of YMCA Youth & Family Services, YMCA Bethesda-Chevy Chase, and the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rotary Club Foundation. This tradition personifies the holiday spirit of family, fellowship and charity... and the spirit doesn't stop at the finish line. This year, the Y is hosting a food drive in which runners and volunteers will feed hope by donating non-perishable foods to Manna Food Center.

The Turkey Chase is made possible every year through the Y's partnership with the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rotary Club and generous sponsors, such as Congressional Bank, who is this year's title sponsor in Bethesda and Kabul. The event features a 2-mile walk/run, a USATF-certified 10K race, and a 50-meter Tot Trot race, where kids 8 and under will chase the elusive Turkey mascot around the Y's infield track. With food, music and a whole infield of entertainment, the Turkey Chase is a Thanksgiving tradition for every generation that raises money for critical social services in our community.

About the Y

The YMCA of Metropolitan Washington has been providing vital programs and services for youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility for nearly 160 years. It is one of the largest social service agencies serving Washington, DC, suburban Maryland, and northern Virginia, having created a positive, lasting difference in the lives of 265,000 people last year through its 17 branches and program centers. The Y is committed to growing the community and ensuring that everyone has access to spiritual, mental, and physical growth, regardless of their ability to pay. For more information, visit www.ymcadc.org.

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