

Running marathon for Ryan

Whitford's Rebecca Robinson is entering the New York Marathon to raise money for the UpsideDowns Education Trust, which helps the families of young children with Down syndrome. **REBECCA GARDINER** reports.

A MUM is making strides to the Big Apple to raise \$10,000 for a charity that's close to her heart.

Rebecca Robinson is taking on the challenge of the gruelling New York Marathon to benefit the UpsideDowns Education Trust that supports families of young children with Down syndrome.

The former schoolteacher's inspiration is gorgeous four-year-old Ryan Mora, who is the son of one of her best friends, Melanie.

"I decided I was going to run the marathon, and to me it was a really logical decision because it means something to me," says Rebecca.

"If I can build up the profile of UpsideDowns, it's a good thing. The trust is for the education of the children and their development."

The 36-year-old, who lives in Whitford, has raised \$7000 in sponsorship so far, but is asking for the East Auckland community's help to reach her \$10,000 target in time for the marathon on November 6.

"I just can't wait," she told the *Times*. "I'm not scared anymore. I'm genuinely excited about being out there with all those people."

Rebecca started training in February under the direction of well-known running coach Jon Ackland and says the regime has been like having a part-time job.

"I don't know how people can do it working full-time," says the mum-of-two, who listens to audio books during her longer runs.

"It's nice. You get to think about stuff and there's no one nagging. I do Howick, Botany, Meadowlands and Pakuranga."

Pounding the pavements of New York, a city that's renowned for fashion, will have its own reward for the bubbly shopaholic.

"It [the marathon] has really happened because I wanted to go to New York," she jokes. "I get to do it and go shopping. A couple of shoe shops, couple of frocks and I'll be away."

When Melanie first found out about her pal's plans to take on the 42km race, she wasn't sure she was serious.

"She first mentioned it and my reaction was 'oh right'," says the mum-of-three, who lives in Parnell.

"I'd kind of shelved it at the back of my mind because it [the marathon] is a big effort."

But once it became clear Rebecca was adamant about going to New York, Melanie was blown away by her mate's commitment.

"When the wheels started turning, it was 'way to go, girl'," she says. "It's really cool that I have a friend who takes an interest and has gone to the effort to be involved in our family."

"She's going that extra mile, not only to support Ryan, but the other families. She's a great friend."

■ If anyone would like to contribute to Rebecca Robinson's fundraising effort for the UpsideDowns Education Trust, log on to www.fundraiseonline.co.nz/RebeccaRobinson.



MARATHON EFFORT: Rebecca Robinson, of Whitford, is running the upcoming New York Marathon to raise money for children like Ryan Mora, who has Down syndrome.

Times photo Wayne Marti