



October 2020

## A Son's Tribute

*East Providence native runs city's streets raising funds in memory of late mother*

*By Catherine Norton, Development Associate*

Stephen O'Grady called his journey, "RunTownieRun." It was a journey that not only involved raising money for East Bay Community Action Program's Foster Grandparent Program, but it was also a loving tribute to his mother, Janet O'Grady. "I wanted to do something in memory of my mother who passed away in April," explains O'Grady. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the O'Grady family was unable to honor their mother's life with traditional funeral services. Within days of her passing, O'Grady realized how he would celebrate her life and honor her memory as a wonderful mother, a caring individual devoted to serving others, and as a Townie ... a life-long resident of East Providence. "I decided to raise money in her memory and run every one of the 809 streets in East Providence," he relates.

As an avid runner, O'Grady got the idea for his "RunTownieRun" fundraiser from a friend and other runners who had done 'run every single street' challenges in cities and towns throughout the United States. "I downloaded street maps of East Providence and began running on April 16, just a week after my mother passed. I created a blog and titled every run so I could remember each one," he explains. The journey was accomplished with a total of 60 runs. On Sunday, October 11, friends, family and fellow runners joined him as he completed his last run on the Riverside Terrace in East Providence's Crescent Park neighborhood. According to O'Grady, the entire weekend was devoted to Janet O'Grady. On Friday, October 9, the family buried her ashes at the Gates of Heaven cemetery; on October 10, they held a funeral Mass; and the conclusion to "RunTownieRun" took place at noon on Sunday, October 11. O'Grady called it the "farewell to Janet weekend."

Reflecting on his mother's life, O'Grady responds, "Everything my mother did, was for everyone else." He describes how she cared for her father, then her mother when she became ill, working nights in order to be there for her mother during the day. Janet did the same years later when her husband was diagnosed with cancer. O'Grady goes on to explain how his mother began volunteering as a Foster Grandparent for EBCAP's Head Start program in 2015 soon after she retired from Rhode Island Hospital after 25 years of service. "My mother loved the Foster Grandparent Program and was loved by the kids and staff alike," relates O'Grady. "Providing an extra set of hands for the Head Start teachers, being there for the children, and knowing she was helping them," he pauses, "it was the highlight of her last years and it is a cause that means so much to me. I'm just glad I can do my part to raise awareness about the Foster Grandparent Program and this wonderful community service the EBCAP provides," he adds.

More than \$1,000 has been raised to date. Anyone interested in donating to Stephen O'Grady's "RunTownieRun" fundraiser may mail a check to **EBCAP, Attn: Finance Department, 19 Broadway, Newport, RI 02840. Please include "FGP - Townie Run" in the check memo.** All money raised will go towards the purchase and installation of "Little Friends of the Library" book-sharing boxes at

EBCAP's Head Start Program locations. These plexiglass boxes are designed for children to take a book or leave a book, and they will be maintained by EBCAP's Foster Grandparents.

For more information on EBCAP's Foster Grandparent Program (FGP), go to <https://www.ebcap.org/programs/east-bay-foster-grandparent-program/>