

Achilles International charity sponsor of the 2009 Marathon of the Palm Beaches

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Downtown West Palm Beach was crazy with activity Saturday as wave after wave of children grouped by ages ran the Marathon Mile at the [Palm Beaches Marathon Festival](#). Celebrity guest Ronald McDonald co-officiated the start of the race.



The last wave of kids to line up was a group of wheel chair bound children with disabilities. Military veterans from the [Achilles Freedom Team](#) raced shoulder-to-shoulder with kids in the group. Clad brightly in red sports gear, commandeering hand cranked wheel chairs, amputees from the Afghanistan, Iraq and Viet Nam wars gave escort to each toothy grinned child as they worked their way down the marathon mile. The vets looked pretty happy, too.



One escort was a salty Viet Nam era Marine with over 26 marathons under his belt. This vet, continues to live a heroic life of service running races, teaching kids, and demonstrating the possibilities open to those with physical challenges.

[Achilles International](#) was the official charity of the 2009 Marathon of the Palm Beaches. Achilles International has made it their mission to introduce and integrate those with special needs into mainstream sports events.

Dick Traum, founder of Achilles International is an above the knee amputee. In 1976 he ran his first marathon. The achievement transformed his life. So much so that he has made it his mission to lower barriers that amputees and those with other disabilities face in life. His way of doing this was clearing the way for them to participate in sports events. Achilles International is represented by chapters in communities around the world.

[The Arc potentials charter school](#) participated with a small contingency of children, teachers and parents. Spectators cheered enthusiastically as each child rolled across the finish line with his or her escort and received a medal. The presence of the Achilles Freedom Team equipped the kids with the knowledge that nothing and no one can hold them back or slow them down.