Dear Friends, Family and Colleagues,

The race was run October 17, 2010 and the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society won! Nike Women’s marathon had 20,000 runners, 4000 of which ran with Team in Training. Thanks to you, the 4000 of us raised 13 MILLION dollars to fight blood cancers. Your generous donations made a difference! A special “shout out” to the La Canada High School Class of 1970 for your donations in Jan Gilpin’s memory. Jan’s mother, Mary Ad, and her sister, Judy, were so touched by your thoughtfulness.

For me it was my first running event, first experience with Team in Training, and first Inspiration Dinner to get us going the night before the race. The latter touched my heart. The dinner was a pasta feed for thousands held in the Moscone Convention Center in San Francisco. When the doors opened we walked into a gauntlet of cheering, clapping and bell ringing coaches, mentors, team captains, cancer survivors and their families from all over the country. These moments of humility and grace left me emotionally vulnerable. When I saw the sign “Because of you, I am a Survivor” in the hands of a cancer patient my tears fell freely. Those short minutes underscored the months of training, amplified the camaraderie of our team, and brought our purpose into exquisite focus.

The run itself was scenic. We began in Union Square and wound our way through the financial district and Embarcadero; past the Ferry building, Pier 39, Chrissy Field, and into the Presidio. The climb began at the base of the Golden Gate Bridge and headed up into the residential area of Sea Cliff. A lot of effort! Just when I was questioning my sanity, strategically placed posters with pictures of survivors appeared bearing quotes like, “Thanks to you I can see my daughter go to college”, “Thanks to you I could become an Eagle Scout”, and “Thanks to you I can see my first grandchild”. The gift of life was a great motivator to get me up the hill and through the rain that had started to fall. We continued down Point Lobos to the Great Highway where we cut through Golden Gate Park. It was wet, cold and windy. My knee was barking and I was tired. My spirits were lifted when my coach, Gary, appeared and ran with me. The course doubled back and crossed the finish line on the Great Highway. San Francisco fireman dressed in Tuxedos presented each of the finishers with a special Tiffany necklace designed just for the marathon. As I crossed the finish line, I heard a voice call out to me. It was Ernie congratulating me. Ernie had recruited me at the initial informational meeting last June. I had come full circle!!!

I appreciate all of the support I received from each of you. I raised approximately $5900 due to your generosity. Your words of encouragement sustained me on this challenge. I cannot say enough about Team in Training and their parent Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. Their efficient, organized staff is supportive and committed to help you attain your walking, running, biking or triathlon goal. In a phrase: they know how to execute. (teamintraining.org)

With love and gratitude,

Sloan McDonald, DDS