

LONG ISLAND

Running in honor of a hero

NYC-LI trek salutes fallen Navy SEAL Michael Murphy

BY RAISA CAMARGO

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When Freddy Rodriguez runs across a 50-mile stretch from Manhattan to Lake Ronkonkoma, he remembers the many lives lost — especially one in particular — in the war zone of a foreign land he's never been to.

All year long, Rodriguez, of Carle Place, braces himself for the race in honor of Lt. Michael Murphy, a Navy SEAL who was killed in 2005 in Afghanistan during Operation Red Wings. Murphy, 29, was posthumously awarded the nation's highest military decoration, the Congressional Medal of Honor, in 2007 for attempting to save three fellow soldiers during an ambush by the Taliban. Only one member of the four-man reconnaissance team survived.

Rodriguez will be joined Friday night by more than a dozen runners when he sets out from Third Avenue at 7 p.m. as part of "50 Miles for Murph." They will run through the night and are expected to arrive in Lake Ronkonkoma on Saturday



Freddy Rodriguez of Carle Place will take part in his sixth straight "50 Miles for Murph" Friday night.

morning. Proceeds from the race will go to the Lt. Michael Murphy Scholarship Foundation, the Lone Survivor Foundation and other charities that benefit veterans.

"That's a long way," Rodriguez said as he recalled when he first took part in the race. "But we just said to ourselves [that] com-

pared to the training these guys went through, what they went through that day in Afghanistan, [the distance] pales in comparison."

Murphy is regarded as a legend in his hometown of Patchogue and a personal hero to Rodriguez, who has participated in the race for the past

five years.

Each year, Rodriguez wears a patch on his arm like one Murphy wore throughout his time in the military. It represents FDNY Engine Company 53, Ladder 43, the firehouse in Spanish Harlem that Murphy's best friend was a member of during 9/11. Rodriguez said the patch was a re-

minder for Murphy of why he and his fellow soldiers were fighting. Rodriguez also wears a T-shirt emblazoned with the slogan "50 miles for Murph and Operation Red Wings."

"I found out he could have had a career as a lawyer but decided he had a better calling in life — he wanted to serve his country," Rodriguez said. "He wasn't just a Navy SEAL."

Daniel Murphy, Michael's father, said Rodriguez is among many people who have worked to keep his son's memory alive. Officials in Patchogue recently dedicated a firetruck "Murph the Protector" in Michael's honor. Daniel Murphy, of Wading River, said the firetruck is another reminder that his son is "still on duty saving lives."

Rodriguez and the other runners will be escorted by members of the NYPD, the Floral Park Fire Department and the Suffolk County Police Department. Several other firetrucks will participate in the event, including "Murph the Protector."

Shortly after Rodriguez and the other runners arrive on Long Island, another race — this one four miles long — will be held in Murphy's memory.

"It gives you an indication of how Michael touches so many lives, even now," Daniel Murphy said. "He did some extraordinary things."

BROOKHAVEN TOWN

Board passes \$400G bond for hatchery

BY DEON J. HAMPTON

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The Brookhaven Town Board unanimously adopted a \$400,000 bond resolution last week as an insurance policy in case a state grant for an expansion at the Mount Sinai Mariculture hatchery falls through.

The move will ensure the hatchery at Cedar Beach will produce 1 million additional shellfish over the next two years.

"We got a grant to expand the production on shellfish," said Councilwoman Jane Bonner, who sponsored the resolution at the June 14 meeting. "It's just security to make sure all

the improvements are covered. Sometimes the grants take longer than we anticipate to come in."

She said the bond, which passed on a 7-0 vote, will not be used if the grant from the state Department of Environmental Conservation arrives on schedule. It isn't clear when the grant is expected.

In any given year, the hatchery places about 3 million oysters and clam seeds in the Mount Sinai and Port Jefferson harbors, Great South Bay and other bodies of water, which help purify the water.

"Whatever we do to increase production is a win-win because they filter the water,"

Bonner said.

Oysters and clams spend the winter in bays, protected by cages while their shells harden. In the spring, the seeds have developed enough to potentially fend off predators, such as crabs. About 75 percent of seeds survive into adulthood.

Brookhaven has 2 million seed oysters, 1 million seed clams and 70,000 seed scallops at the hatchery, town officials said.

"We're looking to increase those numbers and in some cases keep them longer so that they are more mature when we release them into the water," said Town Supervisor Edward P. Romaine.



Craig Strong of Bay Management Specialists inspects oysters that are being grown at the shellfish hatchery in Mount Sinai.