

# CHOICES

January 2024 Special Edition Cupid's Chase



Community Options believes in the dignity of every person, and in the freedom of all people to experience the highest degree of self-determination. Embracing this philosophy, Community Options provides housing, support services and advocacy assistance to help empower people with disabilities. #AllItTakes

## Cupid's Chaser Defies Expectations

As a runner who enjoys participating in 5K and half marathon races, Samantha Vitone was excited when she came across the Cupid's Chase Morristown race in 2018. She saw that like her, Community Options promotes inclusion and supports others' dreams. Nearly a decade ago, excited to start the next chapter of her education, Samantha Vitone applied to several colleges as a senior in college. She worked hard in school and advocated for the support she needed to accommodate her learning disability. The only thing holding her back were others' low expectations.

When Samantha and her mom met with school officials to talk about her impending transition to college, they discouraged her. They told her that her low test scores indicated she was very unlikely to be admitted to college, and that it would be next to impossible for her to graduate. Though initially shocked and disappointed, Samantha ignored the negative feedback and thrived in college.

At first, she was hesitant to ask for accommodation at Salisbury University, but eventually realized she was the only person who could speak up for what she needed. Using her impressive self-advocacy skills, Samantha graduated with a Bachelor's in Sociology from Salisbury, then went on to obtain her Paralegal Certificate from Fairleigh Dickinson University, where she finished school with a 3.5 GPA.

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## Judith Scheide's Legacy

Written by Robert Stack

One of the sweetest, kindest, most generous, affable Princetonians moved back with the angels. The ramifications and influence that Judith Scheide had on me and so many other souls are geometric. Judy was an educator, activist and philanthropist. She impacted thousands of persons with disabilities and their families. Four years ago, Judy challenged our nonprofit with a \$100,000 matching donation. She made this gift to Community Options and today we continually leverage these funds in support of the organization's mission.



*Judith Scheide and Robert Stack*

When Community Options hosted its 30th Anniversary Gala in May 2019, Ms. Scheide was invited to give closing remarks. We had hoped to end the event on a high note with a few words from a warm and graceful guest. Instead, Ms. Scheide surprised us with an announcement that she would donate \$100,000 as a match to all new funds raised. In response, each of Community Options' regional offices from across the country set a goal to attract new sponsors at their local Cupid's Chase 5K.

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IN SUPPORT OF  
**Cupid's Chase 5K**  
National 5K Series  
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

**SAVE THE DATE**

February 10, 2024

[www.comop.org/cupidschase](http://www.comop.org/cupidschase)

**Vaseful**  
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Princeton, NJ 08540

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# Xaverian Students Run in Prospect Park

Demonstrating a steadfast commitment to community engagement, Xaverian High School is once again partnering with Cupid's Chase 5K in Brooklyn. Community Options Enterprises Chairman Philip Lian, a Xaverian alum, has pledged to cover registration fees for all participating students.

This collaboration marks the second consecutive year of support from Mr. Lian and his alma mater's current students for the Cupid's Chase 5K. Over 200 students from Xaverian ran Cupid's Chase last year. Joining them for the run were Elvis Duran and the Morning Show personalities Medha Gandhi and Samantha Rosalie. The Z100 co-hosts, known for their lively and entertaining personalities, did not disappoint as they took the microphone to address the eager runners. Their words of encouragement echoed through Prospect Park, motivating runners as they kicked off the race.

Robert Stack, President and CEO of Community Options, expressed his gratitude, "Philip Lian's unwavering support, coupled with Xaverian's dedication to Cupid's Chase 5K, exemplifies the community-driven spirit that we champion at Community Options. We are sincerely grateful for their ongoing commitment to our mission."



*Philip Lian and Robert Stack along with Z100 personalities Medha Gandhi and Sam Rosalie*

# Nike Joins Cupid's Chase 5K as Exclusive Apparel Sponsor

Get ready to run in style and comfort! Cupid's Chase 5K is excited to announce a new partnership with Nike, the world's leading sports brand, to be the exclusive supplier of the Official Cupid's Chase 5K Participant Shirt. This collaboration signifies a momentous occasion for Cupid's Chase, promising an enhanced experience for all runners, walkers, and sponsors.

Bill Harte, Nike mid-Atlantic Regional Representative, expressed the brand's enthusiasm for teaming up with Community Options, stating, "On behalf of Nike, we are very excited to partner with Community Options. As a brand we are constantly looking to partner with organizations that not only impact athletes but others in a meaningful way. As Community Options expands its footprint having a positive impact on the community, it's very important Nike is part of that journey. As the number one sports brand in the world it's critical we look to partner with first class organizations which is why we are so excited to be moving forward with them."

Lace up, embrace the journey, and let the partnership between Cupid's Chase and Nike make every step a statement.

# Running Love Across the Nation: Cupid's Chase 5K Expands to 46 Races

Building on the record-breaking year in 2023, where over 11,000 runners joined us to raise awareness for people with disabilities, we are expanding Cupid's Chase 5K to an incredible 46 races on February 10, 2024!

New Locations, New Love:

This year, Cupid's Chase is making its mark in five new cities.

- Council Bluffs, IA
- Des Moines, IA
- Washington, PA
- Lubbock, TX
- Ogden, UT

Each of these new cities brings a unique charm, distinctive landscape, and a community ready to feel the love at Cupid's Chase. We look forward to welcoming new faces into the Cupid's Chase family. Whether you're a seasoned runner or someone taking their first steps into the world of 5Ks, Cupid's Chase is about creating an inclusive and uplifting experience for everyone.

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## Cupid's Chaser Defies Expectations

Now, Samantha Vitone works as a Legal Specialist for Litigation and Regulatory Law at Becton Dickinson, one of the largest medical device companies in the world. There, she is involved in the Limitless Associate Resource Group which creates a workplace environment where people with disabilities are openly accepted and valued for their individual contributions.

"I strive to be an advocate for those facing similar challenges to my own, as well as act as a voice to be reckoned with for those who may not have found their own yet. I hope my story gives a reminder that a disability should never hinder you, regardless of how others may not believe in your abilities," Samantha elaborates.

Says Tracy Mendola, Community Options State Director for Northern New Jersey, "We are thrilled to have a race participant who understands the gravity of our mission from firsthand experience. Her story is a lesson in fortitude from which anyone, whether they have a disability or not, can learn."

Next up for Samantha: law school. Community Options will cheer for Samantha as she crosses the finish line at Cupid's Chase 2024, and as she crosses each goal off her list.



## Embarking on a Historic Journey: Cupid's Chase 5K Explores Santa Fe Plaza and Camp Mabry

We are excited to take Cupid's Chase to new heights by moving two of our events to national historic places. By choosing these iconic venues, we are not only creating memorable experiences but also ensuring a lasting impact on the lives of those we help.

### **Santa Fe Plaza - A Pinnacle of Heritage:**

Santa Fe, New Mexico, known for its rich cultural heritage and enchanting landscapes, will host one of our Cupid's Chase runs right in the heart of the city - Santa Fe Plaza. This historic location, recognized as a National Historic Landmark, will provide a stunning backdrop as participants embark on their 5k journey. Get ready to run through the charming streets surrounded by adobe architecture, vibrant colors, and the unique atmosphere that only Santa Fe can offer.

### **Camp Mabry - Where History Meets Nature:**

Austin, Texas, the live music capital of the world, will host Cupid's Chase at Camp Mabry. Participants will not only enjoy a scenic run but also experience the essence of the past, with Camp Mabry being a proud member of the National Register of Historic Places.

By immersing our runs in the rich cultural heritage of Santa Fe Plaza and the historical significance of Camp Mabry, we aim to create an experience that resonates with both participants and the community at large.

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## Judith Scheide's Legacy

Written by Robert Stack

Community Options not only generated enough revenue to leverage the full match, but also attracted new donors who became active and steady partners. Local leaders developed lasting connections to sponsors and networking skills that would support future Cupid's Chase 5Ks and events.

Ms. Scheide knew the power of generating excitement through matching gifts. As we reflect on and mourn her passing, we hope she understood the breadth of the ripples she sent out nationwide; from forty offices to sixty, ten states to twelve, countless new programs established, thousands placed in jobs that they love, dozens of beautiful and accessible homes built, hundreds of families reunited with children moved out of institutions and back to their community. This was all part of Judy Scheide's legacy. Her memory is honored by people with disabilities whose lives, thanks to her generosity, are dignified, visible and meaningful.

# A Decade of Love and Running: Charleston Celebrates 10 Years with NBC Meteorologist Rob Fowler

Heading into its tenth year, Cupid's Chase 5K in Charleston has become one of the series' most successful events. This year, we have the honor of partnering with none other than NBC News2 Chief Meteorologist Rob Fowler, who will not only promote our race but kick-start the event!

Rob Fowler is a familiar face to many in the Lowcountry, delivering weather updates and brightening our screens with his infectious enthusiasm on NBC News2. With decades of experience in meteorology, he is not just a weatherman; he's a community icon. We are thrilled to have Rob's warm energy at Cupid's Chase.

"We're delighted to have Rob Fowler join us at the race. Our goal is to create an enjoyable and lively atmosphere for all our runners," shared Alan Rose, Charleston Executive Director at Community Options. "Together with NBC, we promise a race day filled with excitement and community spirit that goes beyond the finish line."



## SAVE THE DATE Saturday, February 10, 2024

### **ARIZONA**

Tempe  
Tucson

### **IOWA**

Council Bluffs  
Des Moines

### **MARYLAND**

Baltimore  
Silver Spring

### **NEW JERSEY**

Bridgewater  
Burlington  
Glen Rock  
Lake Como  
Morristown  
Princeton  
Seaside Heights  
Westfield

### **NEW MEXICO**

Albuquerque  
Las Cruces  
Santa Fe

### **NEW YORK**

Binghamton  
Brooklyn  
Liverpool  
Manhattan  
Queens

### **PENNSYLVANIA**

Bensalem  
Bethlehem  
Butler  
Harrisburg  
King of Prussia  
Latrobe  
Philadelphia  
Pittsburgh  
Washington  
York

### **SOUTH CAROLINA**

Charleston  
Columbia  
Greenville

### **TENNESSEE**

Chattanooga  
Cookeville  
Knoxville  
Nashville

### **TEXAS**

Austin  
Corpus Christi  
Dallas  
Lubbock  
San Antonio

### **UTAH**

Ogden  
Salt Lake City