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Going the extra mile for a good cause

By WANI MUTHIAH
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KLANG: A chance meeting with a stranger in a gym some two years ago became the catalyst for Jeff Lau Jun Tean to push himself to his maximum endurance level – for charity.

Ralph Dixon, who is a trustee of the Malaysian Aids Foundation (MAF), had told Lau about the plight of young adults infected with HIV and the need for funds to help them.

“It touched me and I felt a deep desire to contribute towards helping those who were infected with HIV as well as help the MAF carry out its outreach and educational programmes,” said Lau who then joined MAF’s Red Ribbon Youth Club.

Lau, 26, who is a communication design graduate from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Australia, will be participating in the Marathon Des Sables 2016 Challenge (MdS) and will walk 251km in the Sahara desert in Southern Morocco to raise funds for

the foundation next month.

The gruelling challenge, to be held from April 8 to 18, has been dubbed as the toughest foot race on earth by *Discovery Channel*, with participants required to complete the full route within six days.

This is the second time Lau is participating in the MdS. The first was in 2014 with Dixon.

“I managed to raise RM80,000 in 2014 and hope to raise RM160,000 this year,” said Lau who admits to being nervous this time around as Dixon would not be participating and accompanying him.

However, understanding the need for MAF to have the much needed support to carry on with its work, Lau is bracing himself to face the challenge again despite describing it as “a frightening experience”.

“My 2014 experience in the marathon was tough and literally a nightmare. We had to move under a 50°C

heat for six straight days and complete 40km every day until the fourth day when we had to cover 80km in one go,” said Lau who will be leaving for Morocco on April 5 and will return home on April 21.

Lau, who is the eldest of four siblings, is now running 35km daily from the Bukit Aman Police Station to the Taman Tun Dr Ismail park in preparation for the race.

His businessman father Lau Pak Lam, 58, keeps him company during the runs.

MAF media communications manager Zaki Arzmi said the funds raised by Lau would go towards the various activities and programmes to help vulnerable groups infected or affected by HIV.

Those who want to support Lau’s effort in raising funds for MAF can do so at online crowdfunding site <https://www.simplygiving.com/event/mds2016> or contact 03-40474257 or 012-9594596 or arif@mac.org.my.

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Ready for round two: Lau participating in the 2014 Marathon Des Sables Challenge. He will be taking part in the 2016 Marathon next month.