

# Girl, 11, to get wheelchair makeover for Barrier Free 5K



Breaking down barriers Emma Pietrafesa, 11, has been named the honorary starter of Boynton Beach's Barrier Free 5K. She will receive a custom purple Camaro wheelchair the day before the Feb. 11 event. Courtesy (Karen Pietrafesa/Courtesy)



By **Jan Engoren**  
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'The Divine Miss Em' is honorary starter at 5K charity event

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**T**he city of Boynton Beach, in partnership with the Realtors Association of the Palm Beaches and the community of Hunter's Run, is putting on the fifth annual Barrier Free 5K Charity Run, Walk & Roll at Congress Avenue Barrier Free Park, 3111 S. Congress Ave., Feb. 11.

***The night before, the city is having Magic Wheels & Special Deals, and will unveil a Magic Wheelchair, being built by the city's project manager Kevin Ramsey and Boynton Beach Police Officer Will Rodriguez for 11-year-old Emma Pietrafesa.***

***Magic Wheelchair is a nonprofit organization that builds custom "costumes" for children in wheelchairs.***

***"This is a family that can use a little magic in their life right now," said Wally Majors, the city's Recreation & Parks director. "We are excited to build a magic wheelchair for Emma and the event allows us to bring attention to our Barrier Free Park, in which children of all ages and abilities can come and play together."***

***Emma, a student at Atlantis Academy in Coral Springs, was born with Cornelia de Lange, a developmental disorder that affects many parts of the body. She uses a scooter to get around and is in need of full care for her daily living.***

***"She's a feisty 11-year-old," said her mother Karen Pietrafesa. "She loves her scooter and playing games in [physical education]. That's where she comes alive."***

***"We call her 'The Divine Miss Em,' she said. "She has princess hair and is just adorable. We're thrilled to be chosen as the honorary starter."***

***Her father, Paul Pietrafesa, a Coral Springs firefighter, died at age 48 the day before Thanksgiving after a year and a half battle with pancreatic cancer, leaving his wife to care for four children, including Emma and another son, Anthony, who was diagnosed with autism.***

***As a tribute to Paul Pietrafesa, the Magic Wheelchair is being built as a 2010 purple Camaro, one of his prized possessions.***

***"We are so excited to host our fifth annual race and to have Emma and her family participate as the honorary starter," said Lori Wilkinson, chairwoman of the Greater Boynton Beach Foundation, one of the main organizers and sponsors for the race. "The Pietrafesa family has been through so much and this event is a perfect way to support them and bring a smile in a much needed time of support and strength."***

***"Emma is a prime example of the reason the Barrier Free Park was built," she added.***

***Visit [Rapb.com/5K](http://Rapb.com/5K) to register.***

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