

Swiss Employees Run Circles Around Autism

by Valliere Jones, contributing writer

More children will be diagnosed with autism this year than cancer, diabetes, Downs Syndrome and AIDS combined, but Avnet Switzerland isn't sitting on the sidelines in the fight against the developmental disorder. Instead, the office is literally racing to help.

In 2007, Avnet Switzerland organized its first charity run to benefit children with autism, and in 2008 the run was opened to partners wishing to join the effort. Each runner solicited pledges from coworkers, friends, family and neighbors for every lap run during 45 minutes on a racecourse.

To help motivate the runners before the race, Avnet Switzerland invited representatives from Autism Center Switzerland to tell them about their work with children and their families, as well as what could be done with the funds raised.

"Seeing pictures of the children who benefit from this money made everybody doubly motivated to give his or her best during the run," says Cristina Tognella, marketing manager for Avnet Technology Solutions. "It was very emotional, and helped us to see our efforts were done for such a good cause."

Between pledges and the CHF 5.00 per lap Avnet Switzerland donated for each sprinter, the run raised CHF 8,000. Avnet Switzerland donated an additional CHF 4,000, and some of the partner companies also contributed.

"Two of the eight partners who joined us were allowed to participate at only four partner events during the year; that they chose our run was very gratifying," says Cristina.

The event – and the networking – didn't end after 45 minutes. Instead, Avnet Switzerland sponsored a post-run carb replenishment dinner of pasta and sausages at the restaurant near the sports field.

Even though the 2009 run is still several months away, planning is already under way. "We hope to double the number of partners participating this year," Cristina says.