

Featured Runner of the Month – June, 2008

Brenda Burns

Editor's note: This interview was conducted in May, 2008.

Our featured runner this month comes to us from across the Indiana/Ohio state line. Brenda Burns is a Greenville, Ohio resident and runs the WCC events on a regular basis. The 2007 season was a fine year for Brenda as she was the 3rd overall female in the Wayne County Challenge. Brenda graciously took the time to share her insights into running and what role running plays in her everyday life.

When did you become a runner? What/who encouraged you to become a runner?

It actually started when we had field days in the 5th and 6th grade. We had to run sprints and the longest run was the mile. I was never a sprinter, so I ended up in the mile run. I was first female and second overall both years.

It was my sophomore year that girls' sports were introduced into the school system. It was the basic volleyball, basketball, track and maybe tennis. We did have one run for girls that was somewhat a cross country run. I tied with another girl at the finish line. The next day, the boys cross country coach asked me if I wanted to join the cross country team. I didn't want to be the only female so I declined. I ran distance and some relays with the girl's track team for three years and played volleyball for three years. I do remember my first year on the track team, I ran in Converse shoes. The next two years I advanced and ran in spikes which had to be switched, according to what type of track we were running on. Most runners didn't like the cinder track, but I didn't mind. I grew up running on gravel to and from the bus every morning and after school.

I have to give all credit to my dad for my running ability. He was/has been my biggest supporter and always encouraged me in all the sports I was involved in. I grew up on the farm and we lived back a lane and had to run/walk to get to the bus and back. I complained and complained and one day my dad asked me if I wanted to get there faster and my thought was that he would drive us down to the bus. I was wrong. His answer-RUN! From that point on, I ran. I enjoyed it and thought it was fun, so I would run along beside him when he was farming. Years later, he went with me to several 5k races and was always there close to the finish line cheering me on. He was the proudest when I finished my first marathon at The Flying Pig in 2002. I took my medal in to show him and he kept it for a few days to "show off" to the other residents at the nursing home. He passed away in March of 2003. That was the year I qualified at The Flying Pig to go Boston. I thought of him often as I ran that race. Although my dad is gone, he is still and always will be my greatest encouragement/motivator.

What motivates you to run?

My first answer would have to be to keep my weight down. I have never been a heavy or overweight person, but have always been conscious about my weight. I have a certain weight I like to maintain and if I get a few pounds over, I either need to watch what I eat, get more miles in or both. I love to eat and I love to run and I think both feed off of each other.

I enjoy the social aspect of running. I love people and I have always felt that one can never have enough friends. I like to laugh and have fun. I have noticed that most runners are happy people and like to have fun too.

Do you have a favorite race overall? What is your favorite WCC race and why?

I enjoy all the WCC races (including Hagerstown-ugh!). Ashtyn's Fire Run (the first one) has been my favorite. When I saw what one community did for one child and the money that was raised, I was amazed. It takes a lot of time and effort to organize a race - - They went above and beyond. It was great!

The year I ran The Flying Pig and qualified for Boston was a memorable one. My friend, Richard Barton, ran with me and was my coach for that 26.2 miles. We were at mile 15 and I realized I only had 11.2 miles left. I felt a little disappointed. I didn't want it to end. I was definitely on a runner's high that day. I enjoyed that run and kept telling myself to make memories - - I was having the time of my life. The one thing that stood out the most was a man on the side cheering everyone on and he looked me in the eyes and said "I am so proud of you". I couldn't believe that a total stranger would be proud of me. But it did give me a boost and apparently I needed it at that time.

Do you have a favorite place to run? How many miles do you "normally" get logged in a week?

Normally, I don't log my miles. Most of the time I run with a group of runners and depending on what they do, I'm in with them. If I run by myself, I usually go with what my body tells me to do. Sometimes hard, sometimes not so hard. It just depends on the day and how I feel.

As far as a favorite place to run . . . that would be anywhere that is trail. I like Hayes Arboretum and The Mounds in Anderson.

What is the best & worst thing about running for you?

The best is spending time and running with friends who understand why I want to run 26.2 miles and all the pains and aches I go through to get there. I love the social aspect of the races and make new friends every year. Runners have a special bond and are like family. The worst has to be when I am injured and can't run for any period of time. I recently was off for two months and getting back into it is tough.

If you could offer advice to a beginning runner, what would it be?

It's always okay to try different things and take advice from different runners, but I would suggest going with whatever feels right for that person. Everyone is different and what may work for one may not work for another. One thing I did learn from Kettering Sports is that I need to stretch before and after I run. Some runners can get by without having to stretch.

What type of goals do you have as a runner, both short term & long term?

I want to continue to run the WCC and also the Mercer County, Ohio Challenge. I would also like to run more marathons. And my greatest goal - to run as fast as I can (with Ann Gibbs) across some river or creek in January, 2009. I have always wanted to be a member of the Polar Bear Club and, hopefully, in January I can mark another life goal off my list. Thanks, Ann!

*Congratulations on your fine 2007 WCC season. We look forward to seeing you at the WCC races in 2008.
Stay Healthy!!!*

Let me tell you, I really enjoyed it. It brought back so many memories. Thanks for letting me be a part of it. I appreciate it!

This interview was conducted by Dale Bolser for the WCC.
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