

Featured Runner – July, 2009

Denise Retz

Editor's note: As a new runner, Denise completed her first 5K race at the 2008 Girls Inc. 5K. Since that first race, she has completed five more WCC races.

Our featured runner this month is Denise Retz. Denise spent several years as the Special Events Director for the Richmond Parks Department. During that time, she directed the Run for the Roses 5K, the Home Run Trot 5K & the Frostbite 5K. Directing those races lead her to visualize a race series that we know today as the Wayne County Challenge. She now joins in running the same events she formerly managed.

Denise spends her days now with her husband Dean and their children. She manages to spend some spare time running and she graciously took some time out of her busy schedule to share her thoughts as a runner as well as the ideas that lead to the development of the WCC.

What/who inspired you to become a runner? How many days/miles do you try to run each week?

There were many who inspired me to become a runner, including runners in the races I previously directed, my family, and also myself. I knew I needed a workout routine to help me lose weight after having my first child and all of the runners were so fit and seemed to have fun running the races when I directed them. It seemed like a good goal to try to run a 5K. After my second child was born I made that goal reality. When you see how many ages differ on the road and how everyone seems to come together for one common goal, to take care of yourself and reach your personal best, it pushes you even harder. I run at least 3 to 4 miles a day, 5 days a week, and try to do something active like yoga or just working in the garden the other two.

Do you have a favorite place to run?

My treadmill is my favorite place to run when my kids are napping... it feels like MY time! But the two fans, TV, and water aren't bad either.

Do you have a favorite (or memorable) race? What is your favorite WCC race and why?

My most memorable race would have to be Girls Inc 2008 because it was my first and I reached that goal of finishing a race and proved to myself I could do it.

My favorite course is probably IU East because of the trails.

What is the most rewarding thing for you as a runner?

My most rewarding thing is to beat my time from the year before at the previous WCC race and to continue to be able to challenge myself.

What advice would you give to a beginning runner? What encouragement would you offer to someone considering a WCC race for the first time?

My advice would be, 'If I can do it without any running experience, you can, too.' The first thing a beginner needs to do is to start! I started walking on the treadmill and running a minute at a time. Now look at me. I am running 5Ks and would love to run the Freedom Festival 10K and one day even the "Mini".

All of us would like to know....what ideas lead you to envision the WCC? What has been your assessment thus far? Do you have any suggestions or opinions for possible growth & improvement?

When I first began my position with the City I planned several events, and 3 of those events were races, Run for the Roses, Home Run Trot, and Frostbite. Not knowing anything about running or directing a race, I relied on runners, research, and other race directors, including Pat Thomas, who really helped me understand the ins and outs of directing a race. I took pride in the races I directed and felt that the runners were such great people, I enjoyed seeing them race after race.

I began to feel there was too much competition within the races in Wayne County and we weren't exactly working together. I also felt that there were so many runners who ran all of our races within the County and a point system would be to their advantage and ours as directors. I called the other directors to set a meeting and presented the idea. Everyone was on board. Mike King stepped in with his love of numbers (thank goodness) and we even had a runner member to help facilitate what the runners would like and need from a point system. Everything seemed to fall in place.

After making the bittersweet decision to leave the job after my first child was born, I knew the Wayne County Challenge would be in good hands. Then when the City decided to let the races go from their scheduled events that I worked so hard to build up, I was proud that the WCC stepped in and took on those races and has done such a wonderful job bringing them forward in such a positive direction. Suggestions are few and far between because everyone is doing such a great job with their races and the WCC itself, but I would like to see a stroller division to bring out more families.

To conclude I feel so lucky to have been a part of the Wayne County Challenge and now I feel even luckier to be a participant!!!! Way to go WCC Committee! Thank You.