

Our Featured Runner this month is Pat Bowers. Pat is a very familiar face as she spent many years guiding the area Easter Seals Programs. Directing the popular Turkey Chase (as well as the Frostbite Run in recent years) were just a couple of her many duties.

As she is now retired, Pat has more time to run and maintain a degree of both physical and mental health. Pat graciously took time out her schedule to share her thoughts as a race director and now as a runner.

You're now retired....how often do you get a chance to run? Do you have a weekly mileage level that you try to maintain?

For the past nine years I have worked out at the Centerville Wellness Center five days a week. I usually do a combination of 3 miles on the elliptical machine, about a half hour on the weight machines, and then run on the track or run from home afterwards. I just added running to my workouts about 6 years ago. I am by no means an accomplished runner, but run to stay fit.

After I retired I had more time to run, but had never really done races. As far as a mileage goal, this summer and fall I was running 3 to 4 ½ miles at least 5 days a week, plus the 3 miles on the elliptical each day. During the summer I was also biking 10 to 15 miles a day about 4 times a week. My goal is not necessarily a set number of miles of running, but to do a variety of exercises to stay fit. Of course all of these plans go out the window when I get a chance to play Grandma and baby sit one of my seven grandchildren!

Due to an injury and recent surgery, my training is going to be limited for several months. I had planned to do the Indy Mini, but it will depend on recovery time.

What was the first race you ever ran? Do you have an especially memorable run (both as a runner and a director)?

The first race I ever ran in was the Frostbite back in 2004 when I turned 62. I didn't attempt any races again until I retired in the spring of 2009. One of my goals at that time was to get in good enough shape to run all of the races in the Wayne County Challenge. The Turkey Chase was memorable because it was the longest race I had done. The Frostbite was very rewarding because it was the culmination of doing all of the challenge races...plus I love the atmosphere of the Frostbite!

As a race director for over 20 years, I have many good memories of seeing the Turkey Chase grow and develop over the years. Directing the Frostbite the last few years was lots of fun.

How did you get started in running? Who encouraged you as a runner?

For forty-five years I have been associated with running, as my husband coached track and cross country for many years. (Currently he coaches at Taylor University.) All four of my children have been runners also. In addition, I have worked many track meets and now help with meets at Taylor University. So, running was not unfamiliar to me, I just was not a runner.

For many years I had been doing 3-4 miles of brisk walking each morning. One winter day at the Wellness Center I just decided I would see if I could run on the treadmill, instead of going out and walking in the cold. I've been running for fitness ever since.

My daughter, Kelli, has encouraged me greatly and has come and run in some of the races. Locally, Pam Mertz and Brenda Baumer have been very supportive. The entire running community is always encouraging at the races.

What advice would you give to a beginning runner?

Just stick with it and have fun! When I started trying to run races, I had to stop and walk some. I was thrilled when I actually made it through a whole race without walking any! If I can finish all 8 WCC races at age 67, anybody can do it, even if you're not fast.

What is your favorite race and why?

I'd rank the Turkey Chase and Frostbite as equal. I like the atmosphere of both of them, plus the 7K is more challenging.

You spent many years as a race director and have now joined in as a runner. What advice might you offer other runners as well as other race directors?

To runners I would ask for your patience with race directors. It is an immense amount of work to put on a good race. Sometimes we run into glitches! Good organization, well-marked courses and paying attention to detail are very important for race directors.

What has been your most rewarding experience both as a runner and as a race director?

My most rewarding thing has been making so many friends in the running community. It's like one big family. The runners are great about showing their appreciation to race directors too.

Are there any other fitness activities you enjoy?

I enjoy backpacking, hiking, biking and working on our farm. One of the reasons fitness is important to me is that I always want to be able to do physical activities with my kids. Several years ago my daughter, daughter-in-law and I flew to Washington State and backpacked in Olympic National Park. Climbing rope ladders up cliffs was a new experience for me.

My son, Kevin, and I took a backpacking trip in the Maroon Bells area in Colorado. We then went and climbed Mt. Elbert, which is 14,433 ft. The altitude made it quite a challenge. It was the hardest thing I've ever done. Last year our family did an overnight backpacking trip in the Tatra Mountains in Poland. (We were overseas for my oldest son's wedding.) This summer my husband and I, along with my son and family, biked from Washington, D.C. area to just east of Pittsburgh, doing 40 – 60+ miles a day, mostly in the rain on dirt trails!

Life is fun when we can stay fit and enjoy it!

Thanks to all of you in the running community for your support of the races I directed and your encouragement now to a slow runner like me!

Thanks, Pat, for sharing your story along with your thoughts and ideas. We wish you many relaxing miles of running and endless years of happy retirement.