



OMAHA RUNNING CLUB NEWSLETTER

*For the members of the Omaha Running Club * Vol. 49* Winter 2019-20*

Attorney takes bite of NYC apple

Amy Erlbacher-Anderson's first New York City Marathon almost didn't happen. It wasn't on her radar screen when she was helping pace a friend at the 2018 Lincoln Marathon. A funny thing happened that day: Her time qualified her for a spot in the Big Apple's huge marathon.

"I didn't notice what my time was," Amy said in a recent interview. "I didn't actually realize that I had run it fast enough until later that day. I had all these people text messaging me, 'You should check your time.' That's when I discovered that I ran it fast enough to get to the New York Marathon."



Amy Erlbacher-Anderson

Having completed four full marathons, the Omaha lawyer was excited about running New York for the first time. And what a time she had, finishing in 3:41:22. In all, 53,517 runners crossed the NYC Marathon finish line.

She soaked in all the atmosphere of the various boroughs and enjoyed every step.

"You get quite a slice of New York, running the marathon," Amy said. "You spend a lot of time running down city streets. It's not only lined with an overwhelming number of very loud people, it houses businesses. First, everything is written in Korean, then everything is half-written in Spanish. Then everything has Italian names on it. The next area has all these Yiddish signs."



Amy Erlbacher-Anderson called the New York City Marathon's course more difficult than Boston and Chicago.

Omahan made NYC Marathon a family affair. **Page 3.**

The course took runners over five bridges, each of which Amy said posed a challenge to all.

"They're not quite so much fun," she said. "Some of them are really, really long. You go up for a long time, then you finally get to go down. The down doesn't seem to make up for the up very much."

Amy added New York to two other major marathons (Boston and Chicago) she now has under her belt. Each was unique, she said, but the most recent marathon stood out.

"I'd say New York is the hardest course of the three," she said. "The hills that they talk about being so horrible at Boston are no worse than any gravel hill around the city of Omaha at all."

The native of Omaha said she's not that high on 26.2-mile races. Amy prefers shorter and longer events.

"The marathon is my least favorite distance," she said, adding that she prefers the half and ultra marathons.

"If I have to pick between 26.2 miles on concrete and 31-ish miles on a dirt trail in the middle of a pretty forest, I tend to end up doing the 50K in the middle of the forest," she said. "I enjoy half-

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NYC Marathon: Chiller Challenge is runner's No. 1 event

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marathons. They're great. You can get up in the morning, run a half marathon and still feel great and still have the rest of your day."

Amy works as an immigration lawyer for the downtown firm of Baird Holm. Married with three children, she finds it can be a challenge to squeeze in a training run.

"I run three week nights," she said. "I do them after work. I have my longer run usually on the weekends. Since I do a lot of ultra running, I'm usually running a couple of hours on Saturday and a couple of hours on Sunday.

"I have friends who get up at the crack of dawn and run before they go to work. I'm not an early morning runner voluntarily. I prefer to get up and go to work and try to get out of work early enough. If worse comes to worse, I live very close to Lake Zorinsky, and I just hit the lake."

Amy joined the Omaha Running Club about 10 years ago, soon after she took up the sport. She participates in many of the Club events and enjoys them all.

"The Chiller Challenge is my favorite," she said. "I don't know why, because it's always cold and nasty. Maybe it's the chili afterwards."

When told about the change of venue from NP Dodge Park to Papillion's new recreation center, Amy said she looked forward to the next Chiller.

"It's going to be so strange not to run at Dodge Park," she said. "I hate to admit it, though, that was the only time of year I ever got to Dodge Park."

She credits fellow Club members for helping her get hooked on running.

"The Omaha Running Club was kind of my entry into the running community," she said. "I had three small children, so going to yoga classes became impossible. A friend of mine suggested running, and I actually started running around their soccer fields while they



Amy Erlbacher-Anderson credits joining the Omaha Running Club for helping her make new friends.

were practicing."

One day while running at Zorinsky, Amy struck up a conversation with other runners.

"They invited me to join them the next time and told me about ORC," she said. "I went home, looked it up and that's when I joined."

Amy credits her association with the Club for adding new acquaintances over the years.

"I've met tons of incredibly neat people," she said. "That's where I met the Ladies of the Evening group that runs once a month on Wednesdays. That's probably one of my favorite side groups within the ORC. There are just some really, really truly wonderful people.

"Joy Mann is probably one of my favorite people in the entire world, and I wouldn't have met her had it not been for the ORC."

Many runners feel that getting miles in can be beneficial in more ways than one. Amy attests to that.

"It always gave me a chance to sort through my issues and my trials and tribulations from work," she said. "I

would spend the first half of my run doing that, and then I sort of spent the second half of my run (transitioning) from not being an attorney to start being a mom.

"Now I love to run, because it's really the only time I get in the day where nobody is asking me to do something. I leave my cell phone in the car, and when I go out and run it's an hour where nobody can contact me, they can't ask anything from me. It's just time for me to clear my head."

Amy has lived outside of her hometown — she moved to Germany in the mid-1990s — but Omaha, she said, is a great place to live and work. Why is that?

"It's the people," she said. "I love the fact that where I live, in five minutes I can be at Target or I can be in the middle of a field in the middle of nowhere. I like that I have all the conveniences of a big city. I have the major operas and musical productions and plays and concerts.

"On the other hand, within 10 minutes I can be in the middle of nowhere where it's quiet and there's no traffic. To me, it's the best of both worlds."



Susan Hrabchak has run a marathon in all 50 states. No. 50 came in 2017 at Anchorage, Alaska. Joining in on the fun were husband Rick and their four children, from left, Tom, Allie, Jimmy and Robert. Rick is preparing to run his 20th consecutive Boston Marathon.

Marathons run in Omaha family

Susan Hrabchak wasted no time getting her running career started. She ran the New York City Marathon as soon as she turned 18, the minimum age, and hasn't slowed down since. Forty years later, the Omaha Running Club member returned to the Big Apple to complete her eighth NYC Marathon and 89th total marathon.

Her first NYC Marathon holds a special memory. Three of her four brothers also ran it.

Susan's running passion is shared by husband Rick and their four children, Tom, Allie, Jimmy and Robert. Rick has four NYC Marathons under his belt, but it's not his favorite.

"The Boston Marathon is his race," Susan said. "This year will be his 20th consecutive year running it."

The couple's children — who range in age from 22 to 28 — have joined their parents for 26.2-mile events. In 2017, the family completed the Anchorage Marathon. It was extra special for Susan

as it marked the 50th state that she had run a marathon. They wore commemorative T-shirts to mark the occasion.

Growing up in Caldwell, N.J., as the only girl in her family of five, Susan caught the running bug early.

"I went to a small all-girls high school that didn't have a track," she said, "but I was part of a group starting the track team for the school."

Her passion for the sport didn't stop after high school. She was one of two walk-ons on the Villanova University cross country team for one season.

"I then realized how disheartened it was to always be in the back pack," she said, "and instead of returning the next fall I focused on running the NYC Marathon each year with the goal of beating my older brothers."

Rick Hrabchak, who was a swimmer at Duke University, was enticed by Susan to get into running. When Rick's not

joining her for a marathon, he's cheering her on.

The couple's four children were raised in New Jersey before they moved to Omaha three years ago. Rick is the chief financial officer, chief investment officer and treasurer at Mutual of Omaha. Susan works as a professional genealogist and docent at Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo.

Before the Hrabchaks joined the ORC, they began supporting Club races soon after arriving in Omaha.

One of the family's favorite races, the Feast and Feathers Half Marathon, takes place on Thanksgiving Day. Like the Anchorage Marathon, it's a family affair.

"It's always a question as to which kids can join us to run, because of flight-time arrivals with the kids," Susan said. "Running Feast and Feathers takes away any guilt from eating too much on Thanksgiving. Plus, it's a great day for me to remind myself how fortunate I am to still be running after all these years."

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omaharun.org

Follow the Club on Facebook, Twitter
& Instagram!

President's Message

With the end of another year, it's time to look back on the many accomplishments of the Omaha Running Club. I am grateful for and extend a special thank you to each and every member of the ORC Board and our great advisors for their time and hard work to help our Club fulfill its mission of supporting the Omaha running and walking community.

But most of all, I am extremely grateful to all the volunteers who give their time and effort so freely all year, as they are the ones who really keep us going. We could not do anything without you.

This was particularly true with our Heartland Marathon this year as our volunteers stayed the course and would have continued to serve even if the event had not been canceled after it started. John Hall will continue his outstanding record of managing our volunteer function, and our volunteer appreciation dinner will return next year as well. I am grateful as well for all the runners who turned out to support our events and gave us their mark of approval by their participation.

I also want to send a special thank you to Mandy Kennedy and Daren and Teresa

Konda for managing the Thanksgiving Fun Run at Lake Zorinsky. Joe Drugmand's photos showed a great turnout which is even more remarkable in view of the other Turkey Day runs that are being put in our

metropolitan area. Thank you, also, to Daren and Mandy for all their work putting on the Holiday Lights Fun Run and our other fun runs this year. The pleasant December weather conditions this year made for ideal running conditions and all the lights around downtown — even without the display historically provided by the Gene Leahy mall — really made it seem like Christmas.

And the hot chocolate, cookies and candy afterward were an enjoyable reward for everyone's efforts.

My sincere best wishes to our members for a healthy and successful 2020. Thank you for supporting our Club. I look forward to seeing you at the Lake Manawa and LaPlatte winter series runs and particularly at the Chiller Challenge on Feb. 2. This is a free race for members, but you need to sign up in advance. We plan to continue our

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Tom Whitaker



The 2019 Thanksgiving Day Fun Run drew a large turnout at Lake Zorinsky. (Photo by Joe Drugmand.)

From the editor's point of view

Runners share their marathon memories

By John Fey

One of the many benefits of being an Omaha Running Club member is the opportunity to meet new people. And I've certainly had the good fortune of doing that since taking on the task of newsletter editor 12 years ago. I enjoy interacting with runners who are willing to share their stories with fellow Club members.



Take John Ritland, for example. A familiar face at many area races, John added another Chicago Marathon to his running resume, which is quite lengthy. The many miles he had racked up slowly took a toll on his 68-year-old body.

His Chicago Marathon time, 6:49:48, was due to walking more than he wanted to. "I had terrible knee issues," he said in a Facebook post Oct. 14. "This most certainly was my last marathon. Knee replacement in a few months."

If that was, indeed, John's last race, his many friends salute him on a most impressive running career. You can bet he'll be volunteering for future ORC events.

Speaking of Facebook, I probably spend more time than I should on it, but it's a good way to keep abreast of family and friends' activities. One post that caught my eye was this question: "What's your favorite race?"



John Ritland had his own cheering section when he completed the Oct. 13 Chicago Marathon. From left are daughter Hanna, wife Greta and daughter Mia. John believes his running days may be over due to knee-replacement surgery.

Longtime runner Mike Huggenberger offered two stories. The first was the 2001 NYC Marathon. It came two months after 9/11. He remembers clearly crossing the Verizano Bridge.

"Off to the left you could still see the twin towers smoldering across the harbor," Mike said. "Hundreds of people were running with names of victims on the back of their singlets. There were fire engines and firefighters along the entire course. It was both a humbling and exhilarating experience."

His second top moment came at the 1986 Boston Marathon.

"At the top of Heartbreak Hill I was so pumped up that the hair was standing up on the back of my neck," he said. "I ran a

negative split which is not easy to do on that course. The crowd was so loud over the last 5 miles you could actually feel the noise pressing against your body."

My running days ended with knee surgery in 2004, but I feel fortunate to have completed four marathons — two Lincoln Marathons (1983-84), the Omaha Marathon (1984) and the 2002 Baltimore Marathon.

Omaha was my best time (3:19:13), but the thrill of running the entire 26.2 miles easily made it the most enjoyable of them all.

If you have a memory from a favorite race and would like to share it with fellow Club members, contact me at: jmfey1952@gmail.com.

Message: Lake Manawa, LaPlatte events on tap for 2020

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Super Bowl Sunday tradition by starting the run at 11 a.m., followed by refreshments, Hall of Fame and Run the Magnet recognition and our Club Annual Meeting. This is our primary membership renewal drive for the year, so we hope to

see as many of you there as possible. You should be finished and back home in plenty of time for the Big Game.

If you have resolved to be more active in 2020, the Lake Manawa and LaPlatte events are a good way to start. Check out the dates on our omaharun.org event calendar. We have a great year lined up,

including maybe one or two new races and encourage everyone to pick up their magnets at Chiller to help keep track of events. Also be sure to check the calendar on the website for upcoming local races and events in Omaha, Lincoln and nearby towns. Run safely, and Happy New Year, everyone!

Chiller Challenge kicks off a New Year

Mother Nature and the historic Missouri River flooding of 2019 affected the Omaha Running Club on two levels. First, Heartland Marathon officials halted the race shortly after the start on Sept. 22 due to dangerous weather conditions and the rising river. Then came the news that NP Dodge Park was permanently closed due to the repeated damage caused by years of high water.

That left ORC's Board searching for a new venue for the 2020 Chiller Challenge. The kickoff to the new year of Club-led events will take place Feb. 2 (Super Bowl Sunday) at Papillion Landing, 1046 W. Lincoln St. The event also serves as the location for the annual meeting and announcement of the ORC Hall of Fame inductees and Run the Magnet award winners.

The good news: Chiller is a free event for Club members — if registered by Jan. 31. If you let that date go by, you can still sign up on race day for \$10. T-shirts are available as well, but you must preorder online by Jan. 23.

The races start at 10:50 a.m. with the 1K kids' run, followed 10 minutes later by the 2-mile fun run. The feature event, the 8K race, starts at 11:05 a.m.

The annual meeting begins at 12:30 p.m. The meeting includes the election of Club officers and a preview of 2020 events. As always, ORC gear will be available for sale or redemption of volunteer points.

Of course, volunteer help is needed for this event. If you can assist, email John Hall, volunteer coordinator, at johnruns4fun@gmail.com.

Running community mourns passing of ORC member Hekl

Dick Hekl was active to the end. The ORC member, runner and frequent volunteer was awarded Athlete of the Year at the 2019 Nebraska Senior Games.

Hekl, former owner of Trade Ruling and Binding Co., died Nov. 17. He was 86.



2019 Go Girl 5K Race Director, Jeremy Kaliff, left, presents Cheri Dickmeyer, Fit Girl Executive Director, with a \$2,000 check representing proceeds raised from the 2019 Labor Day race.

Timer Alan Higley witnesses history at Chicago Marathon

Alan Higley travels the country to help time big-time events, including the Boston Marathon and, most recently, the Chicago Marathon. The Oct. 13 race in Chicago, was memorable for Higley and fellow ORC member Gary Meyer.

They saw a women's world record and a men's champion who won by one second. Kenyan Brigid Kosgei won the women's race in 2:14:04, shattering Paula Radcliffe's course record of 2:17:18. It also wiped out Radcliffe's 2:15:25 world record set in 2003.

Another Kenyan, Lawrence Cherono, was pushed to the end by runner-up Dejene Debela of Ethiopian. Cherono's 2:05:45 clocking edged Debela by one second.

Winter running series gets going at two different sites

Cold? What cold? Fans of winter running have two series choices — one in Council Bluffs and another at LaPlatte, south of Bellevue. The BTC/ORC Lake Manawa winter series has started, and the No Frills Racing Series kicks off Jan. 11.

The Lake Manawa event offers distances of two miles and 10K. The runs begin at 10 a.m. at the north shore park, 11th Street and Hwy. 92. There are 10-year age groups and medals to the top five of both distances. Fee is \$4 at the race site. Call Mick Freeman at (712) 328-3298.

The No Frills Racing Series returns for the 27th year under the direction of Craig Christians. It's a five-mile run (10 miles on the final Saturday) that starts at 10 a.m. at LaPlatte Community Church (16412 Main St., Bellevue). The races, which carry a \$5 entry (includes a pair of gloves), are held the second and fourth Saturdays through March 28. Contact Craig at bruinxc@yahoo.com.

Fit Girl organization benefits from 2019 Go Girl proceeds

The 2019 Labor Day Go Girl 5K was another smash success under director Jeremy Kaliff. The 22nd annual event, which drew 127 finishers on the Keystone Trail, raised nearly \$3,000.

Kaliff recently presented a check for \$2,000 to Cheri Dickmeyer, executive director of Fit Girl, Inc. The other benefactor from the event was the Hope Center for Kids.

Photos from ORC Thanksgiving Fun Run



Photos courtesy of Joe Drugmand.



Ladies of the Evening enjoy Holiday cheer

The Ladies of the Evening meet the first Wednesday of the month for a run, followed by a pot-luck dinner. December had an extra festive feel as they all prepared for Christmas. They'll kick off 2020 with the Jan. 8 group run. They'd love to have more join in, because the more the merrier!



Upcoming Area Race Dates (For Complete Details, Go to omaharun.org)

JANUARY

- 8 — Ladies of the Evening Group Run
- 11 — No Frills Racing Series
- 18 — BTC/ORC Lake Manawa Winter Series
- 18 — Full Wolf Moon 5K
- 25 — No Frills Racing Series

FEBRUARY

- 1 — BTC/ORC Lake Manawa Winter Series
- *2 — Chiller Challenge and Annual Meeting (RTM)
- 8 — No Frills Racing Series
- 8 — Two Rivers Valentine's Day 5K
- 15 — BTC/ORC Lake Manawa Winter Series

- 29 — No Frills Racing Series

MARCH

- 7 — Heat the Streets Run & Walk for Warmth
- 7 — BTC/ORC Lake Manawa Winter Series
- 14 — No Frills Racing Series
- 21 — BTC/ORC Lake Manawa Winter Series
- 28 — No Frills Racing Series

APRIL

- 4 — Nebraska Trail Run 12K

* Indicates ORC-sponsored event. (RTM) indicates Run the Magnet event.

OMAHA RUNNING CLUB

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