



OMAHA RUNNING CLUB NEWSLETTER

For the members of the Omaha Running Club * Vol. 50* Spring 2021

2021 Chiller lives up to its name

The time appears right to dust off the worn-out saying, “What a difference a year makes,” when describing the 2021 ORC’s Chiller Challenge/Annual Meeting. And that applies on more than one level.

On that Super Bowl Sunday in 2020, ORC members were treated to an unseasonably warm Chiller Challenge, and more than 160 took part in the 8K that started and finished at newly opened Papillion Landing. The large gymnasium inside was nearly full as attendees dined on a chili lunch before the program began.

Fast-forward 53 weeks to Feb. 7, 2021, and it was Mother Nature’s revenge. Pairing the coldest temperature of winter with the ongoing pandemic, participation suffered. Just a handful of hearty ORC members elected to venture outside for a pre-meeting “fun” run. They were glad to thaw out inside the gym.

“A year ago it was balmy,” said Club president Tom Whitaker. “This year, it’s North Pole weather. People understood the situation and seemed to enjoy the fun run today. We’re very happy that we could get enough of a break from the weather that we could put this on today.”

Unlike 2020’s event, masks were required when folks weren’t dining on the box lunches that replaced the previous year’s buffet. With the crowd re-



About 40 ORC members braved the elements on Super Bowl Sunday for the annual meeting and the Hall of Fame ceremony.

Weather, COVID-19 made 2020 a challenge for ORC’s chief timer, Alan Higley. Page 6.

duced to about 40, Club president Tom Whitaker opened the program by thanking those for attending. After his brief remarks, he introduced Alan Higley for the announcement of the 2020 Hall of Fame inductees.

As has been common during the 2020 pandemic, Higley was able to stream the meeting live on the ORC’s Facebook page for those who weren’t able to attend.

He then introduced Anne Medeiros, Ann Ringlein and The Bean Team as the newest to be enshrined. Whitaker applauded the choice.

“The Bean Team is a group of people who assisted the Omaha Running Club with food service for a long, long, long, long time,” he said. “There have been quite a few (in that group), and they’ve always done an absolutely magnificent job.

“Ann Ringlein has been a very instrumental part of the Lincoln running scene for many, many years. And Anne Medeiros has been a very worthy competitor for a number of years here in the Omaha area.”

Medeiros gets a surprise

One of Omaha’s most veteran female runners of all time was taken aback with her HOF honor. **Page 2.**

Ringlein still going strong

Ann Ringlein finds time to help runners when not managing the Lincoln Running Company store. **Page 2.**

McMahon meet set to go

Plans are in place for the Jim McMahon Open Track Meet at Omaha Westside High. **Page 7.**

Two veteran runners happy for honor

Medeiros enjoys running, being recognized on runs

Anne Medeiros has a running resume that few in the ORC can match. She was somewhat taken aback, however, by the announcement that her name was to be added to the list of the Club's Hall of Fame members.

"Yes, I was surprised," she said following the Chiller Challenge. "I've listened to all the people named before, and I'm in awe to be a part of it."

Anne, Ann Ringlein and The Bean Team joined 41 others who call themselves HOF members. Medeiros knows just about all of them personally.

"There aren't too many I didn't know over the years," she said. "This makes me want to go give back. I haven't done as much as I could do."

She has an excuse. Hip-replacement surgery put her running days on hold. But she has decades of memories from

See Anne, Page 5



Anne Medeiros was thrilled to become the newest ORC member enshrined into the Hall of Fame.



Ann Ringlein has been working at the Lincoln Running Company for approaching 40 years. Helping customers, she said, is the company's top priority.

Ann Ringlein enjoys life in Lincoln as a store manager, mentor to young runners

To put it mildly, Ann Ringlein leads a busy life. When she's not holding down her full-time job as manager of the Lincoln Running Company store downtown, she finds time to serve as a mentor to young runners and even get in the occasional run herself.

Like her fellow female ORC Hall of Fame inductee, Anne Medeiros, she doesn't consider herself extra special.

"I wouldn't think of myself as the first person you'd think of to get inducted to it," Ringlein said. "But I'm really honored. Then it also makes me think I must be sort of washed up."

Ringlein's story falls into the category of "small-town girl makes good," having grown up in tiny Red Cloud, Neb.

"We were right on the edge of town," she said, "so the country was right there. You'd ride your bikes on the gravel roads."

Attending high school in the 1970s, girls sports were just beginning. She was a sophomore when Red Cloud started girls track. Her first coach, she said, had a sense that she could tackle longer distances.

"He would send me out to the river and

back on a five-mile run," Ann said. "The farthest I could run before that was 800 meters. I remember him saying, 'This isn't far enough for you.'"

With those seeds planted, she started a running career that continues to this day.

"Running, not necessarily competing, has been my thing my whole life," she said. "The competition was the icing on the cake, because I was always running by myself."

After attending Kearney State College, Ringlein moved to St. Paul, Neb., and that's when she ramped up her mileage. And she got better — to the point where she was winning regional races on weekends.

When her husband got a job in Lincoln in 1984, the family made the move to the big city. She was immediately embraced by the running community, and in part through those connections was hired to manage one of the Lincoln Athlete's Foot stores.

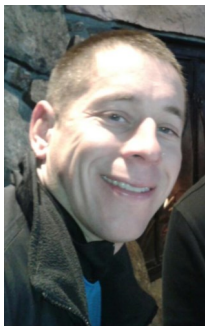
The original Athlete's Foot store in downtown Lincoln was renamed the Lincoln Running Company more than 44

See Ringlein, Page 5

Konda turns into key ORC contributor

Daren Konda got hooked on running early in life. Years later, he got hooked on being involved in the Omaha Running Club. It started shortly after he moved from South Dakota to Omaha.

“I tried to run in grade school,” Konda said, “and enjoyed it very much. Then as our school was consolidating with another school, I rode with the cross country coach from our grade school and ran there. I kind of fell in love with running.”



Konda

make the team.

“I just ran unattached with the team,” he said. “I was the slowest of my group.”

Shortly after graduating, he found himself working in Omaha right after the turn of the century. He continued his running regimen while looking for races to enter.

“I was doing a few marathons and that kind of stuff,” Konda said. “Then I signed up for the Omaha Marathon. I was attending the expo, and somebody asked me if I would potentially be interested in volunteering for any event.”

That’s when he was introduced to the Omaha Running Club. And, like many folks back then, he had a different impression of what the Club was about.

“I thought the Omaha Running Club was only for really, really fast runners,” he said. “I was told no, it’s for everybody. There’s an avenue that does support elite runners, but there’s a tremendous amount of volunteering and there’s a tremendous amount of community support.”

And that’s when Konda’s involvement began. It wasn’t long before he transi-



Daren Konda has served on the ORC Board for more than a decade. “I always had a love for supporting other runners within the area,” he said.

tioned from a regular volunteer to a member of the ORC Board, a post he’s held for more than a decade.

“I always had a love for supporting other runners within the area,” he said. “That’s always been a positive thing of being part of the Club.

“I’ve always enjoyed that the Club can be supported completely by volunteers, including the Board members. It’s been good.”

Konda has seen the Club grow over the years.

“We’ve transitioned from not having enough money to barely get by (to put on) races,” he said, “to effectively — with some of the community support we’ve gained — put on some fun stuff.”

Konda’s contributions to the Club can’t be overstated, according to president Tom Whitaker.

“Oh, my gosh,” Whitaker said, “he’s a bundle of energy. He’s always planning stuff. He’s the head of the equipment committee. He lays out our courses and sets them up for races.

“We wouldn’t be much of a club without him.”

Konda calls 2020 and early 2021 a major challenge for the Club — on multiple levels. He pointed to not just the pandemic but the flooding that plagued the Heartland Marathon and the construction along the riverfront that altered the start/finish line in 2020.

“Luckily, we’ve been fortunate (dealing with COVID-19) in that last year we were able to do essentially all but two of our races,” he said. “Granted, a couple were virtual, but we were able to do it with great community support.”

Speaking at the end of the Chiller Challenge program, Konda said he wasn’t sure how soon we’ll see a return to normal for race management, but he’s optimistic.

“I do know that we have learned how to deal with some of it,” he said. “Therefore, we can return to, not necessarily the way it was before, but we can continue to do events in slightly different ways.”

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and Board Members

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omaharun.org

Follow the Club on Facebook,
Twitter & Instagram!

President's Message

As we approach what is normally the prime season for races, I have been reading a number of articles about COVID-19 and running in hopes of gaining insight into how the ORC should be planning for upcoming events that are safe and meaningful to runners.

Unfortunately, opinions (some based on research, some not) vary widely on what will work and what will not. The consensus among health professionals seems to be that running will strengthen immune systems and go a long way to ward off virus infections of all varieties.

And that running outdoors in socially distanced conditions is an excellent way to safely maintain fitness and relieve stress. My unscientific observation is that I don't personally know of any runner who has been affected by COVID-19. I am sure there have been some, but there has been little mention of high rates of infection in the running community. With everyone's wellbeing of utmost importance, the ORC is busy planning to do our best to return to live events while meeting the safety recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and other experts in the field.

We have had a tough winter by any standards that saw a lot of snow and a couple record cold snaps as well. We need some good weather as spring arrives to promote a great offering of Club events for the coming months. I would like to especially mention one in particular, the Jim McMahon Open Track Meet scheduled for June 13. Derek Fey has done an outstanding job putting on this event in years past, and we are looking forward to its revival this year.

Among a great lineup of programs and events this summer are the marathon training program that will be led by three-time Olympic Marathon Trials veteran Christy Nielsen and the women's training program

led by Jeremy Kaliff. These programs provide great opportunities to enjoy some dedicated and talented guidance and coaching for a variety of participants.

Our program directors will once again be working their special brands of magic in supporting and training all levels of ability. And the many races and Club fun runs throughout the summer give great chances to apply lessons learned, enjoy the company of other runners and perhaps go home with a little hardware as well.

As this year's racing season kicks off, I would like to say a few words about supporting local events, particularly Omaha's Heartland Marathon, Marathon Relay, Half Marathon and 10K.

Here are just some of the

activities your local Running Club provides during a given year to support the running community:

» We will be putting on five holiday-themed fun runs per year. These are free to members and the general public alike; just show up and participate. Our fun-run coordinator, Daren Konda, always has door prizes and often refreshments for those who attend.

» We hold seven Club races of various distances that are fee-supported and timed with T-shirts and awards for overall and age-group winners. Any proceeds left over after contributions to charities are used to support the activities of the Club. All Club officers and race officials are uncompensated volunteers; we all do this because we want to carry out our Club mission and support our local runners.

» We maintain a website that provides a free event calendar where any organization putting on a race can post its event without charge.



Tom Whitaker

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Anne: Boston trips atop runner's thrills

Continued from Page 2

many races.

"Of course, doing the Boston Marathon when I was 50, that was good," Anne said. "Reading the paper the next day that I had done well for my age group — a top 10 — that was good."

Aside from eight trips to Boston, Anne recalled the Richfield Run as a favorite.

"That was my first race," she said. "I was third in my age group, and that just got me going."

Although Anne doesn't consider herself a celebrity, she is quite well known in the running community.

"I'm always honored that they recognize me, because things do change. I'm really happy to get this honor."

Ringlein: Managing races still a challenge

Continued from Page 2

years ago. Ann has been working there for nearly 40 years — most of the time serving as store manager.

From her first year in Lincoln, Ringlein became more involved with the local running community. And it grew with each passing year.

"The store had a mile race," she recalled, "and I helped with that. Eventually, you get really involved, and you try to help in whatever way you can. You're helping other people to have success running. It's great."

Putting on races is hard in a normal year, but Lincoln was affected by the pandemic just as badly as Omaha over the past 13 months.

"There were times when I felt like there was nothing that will make me do that again," Ann said. "I didn't sleep, I wor-

ried. You just want to make sure you're doing everything right, but you can't make everybody happy. You just can't. I think emotions were higher last summer."

As time went by, races became somewhat easier to manage, she said, but it was still a challenge.

"You kind of had it all down," she said, "but it still was a lot of work. My theme all year has been, 'Be kind, be kind.' You just have to be really nice to everybody."

The pandemic did put a dent in the running business, but Ringlein found that while some things changed, many others stayed intact.

"In the end, it's all about really helping people and taking care of them," she said. "You're offering them lots of (running gear) solutions and injury solutions. We've seen everything here in downtown Lincoln."

Message: Not a runner? Volunteering gives Club events a boost

Continued from Page 4

» We provide valuable information on our website for organizing and putting on events that is available free of charge.

» We provide equipment rental services that makes time clocks and finish-line equipment available to events at a reasonable rental rate. Although we may make some money doing this, there is a substantial investment involved. Finish line clocks and tripods alone cost close to \$2,500 each and must be maintained and repaired when necessary.

» We provide race-result services as well for a reasonable price.

» We publish a quality newsletter that has won the Road Runners Club of America national award for large club newsletters.

» We sponsor the Step into Running program, a beginning training program for women currently led by Jeremy Kalliff, that has gotten hundreds of ladies

over the years off the couch and into a healthy life style. And we do it for the cost of a Club membership.

» We organize a Distance Training Program that provides professional coaching, educational speakers and encouragement for anyone interested in training for a marathon or half marathon.

As you know, the Omaha Running Club is a volunteer organization with a mission to support the Omaha running and walking community. We do our best to support that mission to the extent that everyone's available personal resources permit. A number of national events these days serve a purpose by putting on challenging and unique events, but they are not owned locally.

I would urge everyone to keep in mind that although these may be worthy events, they come to town, utilize local resources and leave town with the proceeds. Other than providing an event in which to participate, they do little to support our local community. Please

keep our local events in mind as you plan your racing season.

We especially hope you will go to heartlandmarathon.org as soon as you can after you read this message and sign up for one of Omaha's Heartland Marathon events. Not ready for a marathon or the half? Then get a team together and do the relay or sign up for the 10K.

Not ready to run at all? You can still be a valuable part of this event by volunteering. We always need A LOT of volunteers to make this a success. We will have volunteer opportunities listed soon, so check out omaharun.org/volunteering and sign up. You will be providing a very important service to our local running community.

My point with the foregoing is to emphasize that support for your Club by running or volunteering for local events is important. Remember, any money raised stays right here in Omaha to support you, the local runner, the very reason for our existence.

Timing business took a hit during 2021

Alan Higley has served as official timer for the Omaha Running Club for nearly two decades. Never has he had to deal with unusual — to say the least — circumstances like those during 2020. Between COVID-19 and less-than-ideal weather, he was more than ready to say hello to a new year.

“From March through July, we did nine virtual races,” he said. “Starting July 3, we resumed in-person activity.”

But even that was anything but normal. Any organized race after the middle of the year required working with local health organizations. There were strict requirements for road races and restrictions on post-race activities.

“We had to socially distance the start line, 6 feet apart front to back and 6 feet left to right,” Higley said. “We used small waves of 25 to 75 people. The largest race we did was probably 700 (participants).”

He also timed the Nebraska high school state cross country meet in Kearney, which also was a challenge.

“We had about 800 in person,” he said, “but they had eight start waves.”

Virtual races were another matter. Participants would submit their times, and Higley would calculate them using Mtec



Alan Higley has seen it all during his many years of timing races.

computer technology to calculate their final time. Runners then could download a finisher’s certificate.

“We had between 27 and 78 percent participation in those,” he said, “depending on how well the event marketed it and how receptive individuals were to participate in it. Early on in the process, people were not happy that we had gone virtual. Later, they were more accepting of it, because they just want to run and get their results.”

Also new during the pandemic was what Higley described as “hybrid” races, a combination of in-person and virtual. One of those early ones took place in the Lincoln area in August. In September,

the Harvest Moon Hustle also tried the hybrid method.

“They had about 50 percent participation in-person and 50 percent virtual,” he said. “It was a pretty good turnout. It worked out well.”

Weather conditions aren’t a major concern, Higley said, as far as how his equipment operates.

“It affects the timing personnel worse than it does the equipment,” he joked. “The equipment actually will function as long as it’s plugged in and as long as you can keep the batteries in the equipment warm. But at 4 degrees, it doesn’t take too long to freeze up a battery.”

With the low turnout and the extreme cold, Chiller turned into a fun run.

Higley remembers one of the most difficult events he ever timed. It happened at the 2019 Heartland Marathon, which had to be halted shortly after it began due to a surprise thunderstorm.

“The equipment has air vents which help keep it cool,” he said. “That’s great in the summer, not so good in the rain. That day, we had water over the top of the decoders. I had to send two of them in for precautionary repair. I had to have one battery replaced.”

Omaha Running Club Hall of Fame Members

<u>Name</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Year</u>
Frank Perrone	2004	Leonard Vavra	2007	Roxi Erickson	2014
Jill Garlock	2004	Alan Higley	2008	Daren Konda	2015
John Petersen	2004	Gary Meyer	2008	Tom Whitaker	2015
John Thomas	2004	Bea Sides	2009	Jose Badillo	2016
Karlene (Erickson) Herrell	2004	Cliff Karthaus	2009	Harvey Kunz	2017
Mick Freeman	2004	Lou Soukup	2009	Tony Jones	2017
Nancy McCormick	2004	John Hawkins	2010	Nancy Sutton Moss	2018
Bob Garcia	2005	Stan Shirk	2010	Christy Nielsen	2018
Chuck Cooper	2005	Greg Carlberg	2011	Tom Cody	2019
Craig Christians	2005	Jimmy Hall	2011	Jon Eggers	2019
Mike Ewoldt	2006	Ronn Baker	2012	Glen Moss	2019
Tim Hendricks	2006	Erin Sullivan	2012	Anne Medeiros	2020
Todd Nott	2006	Gary Wasserman	2013	Ann Ringlein	2020
Dick Burrows	2007	Jim McMahon	2013	The Bean Team	2020
Gary Julin	2007	Ron Olsen	2014		

Visit to the Sunshine State was a blast

By John Fey

For those of you who know longtime ORC member Lou Soukup, you'll be pleased to know he's living the dream at The Villages in Florida (about 60 miles northwest of Orlando). Wife Shirley and I happened to be there with another couple, and I just had to see how he's doing. Lou and wife Connie moved from Omaha 10 years ago and absolutely love it there.



After spending just two full days there in late March, I can certainly see why. I've never visited anywhere that offers so many activities. You can play tennis, pickleball (which is huge down there), bocce ball, slow-pitch softball or shuffleboard — just to name a few. Also popular is ballroom dancing, a favorite of the Soukups.

But the most amazing thing I noticed immediately was the many walking/running/biking trails. Some of the wider trails are shared with golf carts — and there a hoards of them (not just carrying

golf clubs, either). You can traverse the entire 32 square miles (as of 2018) of the city within a city by bike or golf cart. The population as of three years ago was just under 130,000, but as Lou told me, "They can't build houses fast enough."

We stayed quite a bit south of the Soukups' home, but they were gracious enough to pick us up and give us a tour of the area and their place. Lou has an unbelievable collection of trophies, medals and certificates from his decades of road racing.

I'll feature Lou in the summer issue. His story is pretty amazing.

Soukup was mentioned during the Feb. 7 Chiller Challenge ceremony announcing the newest Hall of Fame inductees. For many years, Lou headed the panel of ORC members who voted on nominations. And he continued that task after moving to Florida.

A few years ago, he passed the baton to Alan Higley, but Lou still is involved with nominating candidates. Few members of the ORC know the history of our Club like Lou Soukup.

The Club came up with another dandy lineup of inductees: Anne Medeiros, Ann Ringlein and The Bean Team. Our younger members likely don't know the history of The Bean Team. (It was news to me, and I'm not young.)

Members of the team have been volunteering for decades at most ORC events — including serving food at the annual Chiller Challenge. You no doubt saw them there but likely didn't know about their contribution to races.

Speaking of this year's Chiller, it was one miserable morning for those who braved the elements for the "fun run." I wasn't one of them, but I tip my hat to those who battled Mother Nature. It was bad enough that the coronavirus was still going strong (although we're slowly turning the corner with vaccinations), then came the single-digit temps and sub-zero wind chills. That no doubt contributed as much as COVID-19 to the low turnout compared to past Chillers.

With warmer weather finally here, let's all get vaccinated and resume closer to normal lives. I think we'll all agree that 2020 was a year to forget.

McMahon Open Track Meet set for Westside

The ORC Jim McMahon Open Track Meet returns this June after, much like many races, a year off due to the pandemic. The meet is scheduled for June 13 at Westside High School.

Race-day registration begins at 7 a.m., but participants are encouraged to register online before June 1 to get a T-shirt with their entry. To sign up, go to this site: <https://bit.ly/3moEQkM>.

You can also find the meet registration link on the ORC online calendar.

The cost is \$25 and includes a T-shirt, as well as competition in up to four events. Events include the long jump, high jump,

Jim McMahon Open Track Meet

When: Sunday, June 13

Where: Omaha Westside High

Time: 7 a.m. (race-day registration);

events run 8 a.m.—1 p.m.

Fee: \$25 (includes T-shirt)

To register: <https://bit.ly/3moEQkM>

discus, shot, javelin, 100-meter dash, 200 dash, 400 dash, 800 run, 1,600 run and 5,000 run. The meet will use fully automatic timing (FAT).

The meet is named after Jim McMahon, former Midland Lutheran University

head cross country and track/field coach. McMahon spent more than 40 years at Midland Lutheran. His 1989 women's track team won an NAIA National Championship.

Most importantly to the Omaha Running Club, McMahon was a founding member of the ORC in the 1970s.

McMahon passed away from cancer in 2016.

Each year, several members of McMahon's family compete in the event, and that tradition is expected to continue this year. If you don't plan on running, come cheer on the participants!

OMAHA RUNNING CLUB

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