

# CHECKERS ATHLETIC CLUB

FOR ALL ABILITIES

CHATTER

November/December 2012

Have a Wonderful Holiday Season



Our young track stars!



Bryan Robertson, Amberelee Robertson, Ashley Baskerville, Hunter Baskerville, Laura Cohn, Allison Web and Jacob Web.



A huge thank you to coaches Vicki Mitchell and Roger Roll for leading another successful track season.

New this year: We didn't move to Crosby and instead stayed at U.B. and enjoyed the ample parking and a first-class track.

New this year: We didn't move to Crosby and



Diane Sardes  
Joan Crouse  
Garry Soehner  
Louise Heard  
Rick Schoellkopf

The 2012 Tom Steele Award winners: Diane Sardes, Joan Crouse, Garry Soehner, Louise Heard, and Rick Schoellkopf - our Checkers photographers!



Checkers president Tom Donnelly thanks Megan Nelson for her fine work with the Zero to 5K program. Many thanks Megan!



Lynn Miller



The Checkers Award Banquet was held on October 30. Members received awards for their achievements throughout 2012.



Sabrina Baskerville

# Announcements & Upcoming Events

## Checkers Holiday Party January 26 New Location, Lafayette Hotel.

The Checkers annual holiday party is on for Saturday, January 26 at the Lafayette Hotel in downtown Buffalo. The party begins at 6 p.m.

We'll have food stations, carving stations, vegetarian options, and a cash bar. Dennis George is again providing the entertainment. All Grand Prix winners will receive Runner's Roost gift certificates.

The cost is just \$20 per member. Please send your check payable to "Checkers AC" by Wednesday, January 16 to:

Sandy Hebler  
3214 Saunders Settlement Road  
Sanborn, NY 14132

If you'd like to make a full evening of it, the Lafayette Hotel has reserved a block of 14 rooms at discounted rates until December 24. To reserve a room, call the hotel (853-1505) and tell them you're a Checkers member

## RACE CALENDAR

Sat	12/22	9:00	Kawelle Ugly Sweater Fun Run	Williamsville	5k
Tue	1/1	1:30	ERC New Year's Day 5 Mile	Eric	5m
Sat	1/26	10:00	Ice Man 2-Miler	Buffalo	2m
Sun	1/27	11:00	Penguin Run	Amherst	5k
Sun	2/3	11:30	Mr. Ed's Super Bowl Warm-Up	Middleport	5k
Sat	2/9	10:00	Lockport Y-10	Lockport	10m
Sun	2/24	10:00	Polar Bear 5K	Olcott	5k
Sun	2/24	12:00	Canisus Chilly Challenge	Buffalo	5k
Sat	3/2	12:00	Shamrock Run	Buffalo	8k
Sun	3/24	9:30	Around the Bay	Hamilton	30k

### 2012 Checker's Grand Prix Race Series Final Results

Congratulations to the winners in each V02 max scoring group and thanks to all who competed!

- |                   |                  |                     |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| A) Scott Simon.   | B) Joe Norris.   | C) Amy Fakterowitz. | D) Jim Figler    |
| E) Randy Brownlee | F) Michael Irish | G) Heather Burger   | H) William Moore |
| I) Anna Kwaizer   | J) Stacy Curry   | K) Garry Sochner    | L) Ed Russell    |
|                   | M) Paul Hassall  | N) Teresa Ryan      |                  |

All winners will receive a gift certificate from Runner's Roost, to be presented at this year's Holiday Party

To see the complete Grand Prix standings, go to [checkersac.org/Results/RTS2012.html](http://checkersac.org/Results/RTS2012.html)



## Checkers in the Tarheel State by Tom Droz

On November 17, the 8th Thunder Road Marathon, Half Marathon, and 5K were held in Charlotte, NC. Checkers was well represented as nine members headed south in vans, cars, and planes to experience southern hospitality firsthand.

If you like hills, this is your race. They were plenty of them. We saw T-shirts for sale that read, "Flat is for Sissies."

While the elevation was a challenge, this was a beautiful course. Much of it was run on wide, tree-lined streets with large impressive mansions throughout. The morning air was chilly, but it warmed up as the sun rose and the race progressed.

The finish line, appropriately, was at the entrance to a Charlotte icon — the NASCAR Hall of Fame. The post-race party featured live music (an almost all-girl band singing "No Matter What") and you could even have a couple of beers.

In short, Thunder Road is a very well-managed and well-attended event — a perfect fall destination and the 33rd state I've had the pleasure to have raced in!



## My Brush with Running Greatness by Laurie Seier

A real highlight of my running season this year was meeting Katherine Switzer. She was the starter for the Empire State Marathon and Half-Marathon in Syracuse in October. You may recall that she was almost pulled out of the Boston Marathon in 1967, in what was then, an all-male event. She ended up finishing the marathon and paving the way for women in the sport of long-distance running. In her 6th decade, she is still running marathons, writing books, and commenting on television. In person, she is a warm, engaging, and very friendly person. She told me, "be fearless and always be free; running will give you everything, especially yourself."

Pictured (L) Marie Hannotte, (Center) Katherine Switzer, (R) Laurie Seier.

## The Checkers board wants you!

The Checkers Athletic Club's board of directors is made up of 10 of your fellow Checkers club members. Each year, five of those 10 board seats come up for election.

Why not consider running for one of those seats in 2013? If your Checkers membership is current, you're eligible.

The board meets the last Tuesday of every month — except in March, October, and December. Board meetings typically last 90 minutes.

You bring ideas and enthusiasm to the meetings, and the club brings pizza, wings, and beverages. It's a great way to give something back to the finest running club around.

If you're interesting in running (for the board, that is) or would like to learn more, email club President Tom Donnelly at [runfasttom@aim.com](mailto:runfasttom@aim.com).

Voting results will be announced at the spring meeting at the end of March.

We look forward to hearing from you.

## New Members

Lindsey Cuyx

Cindy DeMarti

Julie Daniel

Lucille Kingston

Hal Kingsley

Kabia Muhammad

Hannah Stillings

Danielle Kizzo

Timothy Kizzo



## PERSONAL RECORDS!!

YMCA Turkey Trot 8K

29:38

Jim Figler

Life

34:32

Barry Latner

Life

35:05

Sabrina Baskerville

Life

Lindsay's Legacy Run 5K

20:48

Barry Latner

Life

Pumpkin Run 5K

30:42

Jane Grzebinski

Life

Chicago Marathon

3:56:29

Michael Olear

Life

Pit Run 10K

1:07:46

Ginny Krollman

Course

Timon Fall Challenge 5K Run

26:39

Ivar Lupkin

Life





# HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Ryan Murphy	12/1	Theresa Gendron	1/1
Dina Bell	12/4	Greg Murnock	1/1
Robert Dimmig	12/4	Gloria Santarpia	1/1
Jim Kavanagh	12/4	Diane Sardes	1/1
Monica Quebral	12/4	Ed Wardrop	1/1
Thomas Tarapacki	12/4	Shannon Dougherty	1/2
Fran Warthling	12/4	Rick Krollman	1/3
Matthew Poeller	12/5	Herman van Leeuwen	1/3
Stephen Suchan	12/5	Michael O'Neill	1/4
John Teuscher	12/5	Meghan Lytle	1/6
Brenda Bartkowiak	12/6	Joseph Wukovits	1/7
Lisa Buzby	12/6	Chuck Tokarz	1/8
Mary Roll	12/6	Cindy Bartkowiak	1/9
Ray Ernst	12/7	Megan Nelson	1/9
Bilal Khashfe	12/7	Hermann Pohl	1/9
John Lintner	12/8	Barbara Quebral	1/9
Dan Shubsda	12/8	Tim Zelasko	1/9
Hugh Arthur	12/11	Tim Dieffenbach	1/10
Diane Donnelly	12/11	Alexis Bell	1/11
Jerry Bergman	12/12	Jerry Mangan	1/12
Laurie McGorry	12/13	Carol Smith	1/12
Ann More	12/13	Paul Duttge III	1/13
Christine Quenneville	12/13	Gary Hackbush	1/13
Tom Droz	12/15	Rosalie Marino-Soehner	1/13
Kim Chinquee	12/16	Jackie Appenheimer	1/14
Jonathan Amoia	12/17	Joni Maxick-Jason	1/15
John Feroletto Jr.	12/17	Cindy Rehberg	1/15
Wendy Guyker	12/17	Michael Widener	1/15
Mike Rogers	12/17	Brad Boyle	1/16
Annie Schuster	12/18	Cindy DeMarti	1/16
Allison Bartkowiak	12/19	Gery Buchholtz	1/17
Jim Hannotte	12/20	Tracy Adkins	1/18
Darell McKenrick	12/23	Bridget Paweleczak	1/18
Gary Raby Jr.	12/23	Edye Radice	1/18
Timothy Rizzo	12/23	Patricia Judge	1/19
Laurie Seier	12/23	Lawrence Strauss	1/19
Grant Hennigar	12/25	Kevin Mietlicki	1/20
Thomas Donnelly	12/26	Bobbie Murray	1/20
Don Bartlett	12/27	Joe Norris	1/20
Becky Donnelly	12/27	Michael Woltz	1/20
Keith Hensley	12/27	Lorinda Buckley	1/21
Peter Simon	12/29	Maria Droz	1/21
Jason Emmerling	12/31	Deborah Morrison	1/22
Brenna Symoniak	12/31		
Paul Wandel	12/31		
		Catherine Vasquez	1/22
		Ryan Buzby	1/23
		Marc Quettimann	1/23
		Mary-Lyn Adkins	1/24
		Darius Daniels	1/25
		Billy Flynn	1/25
		Patricia Hilbert	1/25
		Steven White	1/25
		Chris McConnaghy	1/26
		Deborah Miller	1/26
		Eric Niedermeier	1/26
		Paul Donnelly	1/27
		Holly Justice	1/27
		Denise Kennedy	1/28
		Evan Hilbert	1/29
		Laura Kamela	1/29
		Jennifer Schaffstall	1/29
		Darlene Schweikert	1/29
		Melanie Grzebinski	1/30
		Larry Ammon	1/31
		Elizabeth George	1/31



## Winter Training: Create a plan for YOU

*By Coach Vicki*

Too many go into the winter months with the idea that one can't improve fitness for running. There are no formal track sessions; it is too cold; it is too dark, etc. And, many believe, "you are supposed to take the winter off." Combine that with the Holiday treats that we are surrounded by for nearly two months... you get the picture... you are right back to square one where you started the track season last spring.

### Let's start off the winter with a NEW plan just for YOU.

I am not one to make "New Year Resolutions." Instead, I am one that likes to make commitments to small changes that will yield big results in the end. Here are a few simple steps that will help you create your plan for this winter.

Step 1: Choose ONE area that you feel is a weakness. For example, your hamstrings are problematic, or your heels (plantar Fascia) bothers you after fast running or your shins get sore. Just choose ONE!

Now here comes the fun stuff. Pick 4 exercises that you can do EACH DAY to help strengthen this area.

The exercises should take a max of about 10minutes. That's it!

o Here's an example: sore shins

- ◆ Calf exercise of Toe Raises – 2 sets of 10 reps each foot (do them single legged).
- ◆ Ankle Circles – 'draw' the alphabet with your foot, leading the letters with your toes and making the ankle through a full range of motion
- ◆ Barefoot Walk: roll slowing from heel to toe, using/stretching the full foot, go about 10meters.
- ◆ Stretch the Calf and Achilles

o To find exercises that will help you with your problem areas, you can try one of the resources below or simply search on "Google"

- ◆ <http://www.smiweb.org/resources/guides/>
- ◆ <http://www.ideafit.com/exercise-library/glute-mediis-workout-for-runners>
- ◆ <http://www.coachjayjohnson.com/2012/08/phil-wharton-foot-and-ankle-routine/>
- ◆ <http://www.coachjayjohnson.com/2011/11/eight-week-general-strength-progression/>

Step 2: Plan your Alternative Cardio exercise. Winter time is a great time to back off from the pounding of running, especially if your body is telling you to rest from the pavement. But, you do not want to totally ditch your cardiovascular system! Below are some ideas of putting cardio into your weekly fitness routine.

Remember, just because it is winter, doesn't mean we can't be fit and healthy!

- ◆ Try a different piece of cardio each week to switch up the movements. For example, try the ARC Trainer, or a Spinning Class, or stationary bike that has a computer that you can 'race' against. Also try some of the pre-set programs such as Intervals, Hills, or Random. This chooses the workout for you and gives you a 'new' workout each time.
- ◆ Set your minimum limit for exercise at 20minutes, and maximum to 60minutes (unless you have additional training goals).
- ◆ Commit to your Cardio at least 4 days/week.
- ◆ If you do not have a gym, consider joining your local gym for a wintertime special (talk to the sales people... nearly ever gym offers great deals in the winter months).

Step 3: Winter Running. Switch it UP. Running speed work in the winter is tough to do. However, wintertime is a great time to work on endurance and strength. Sometimes, it requires you to be a bit creative. Here are some ideas to keep you running and strong.

- ◆ Add some HILLS. Running hill repeats is just like doing intervals on the track as it increases your heart rate, builds strength, and helps to improve form. Hills can be run on both the road and the treadmill. Here are some ideas for workouts (assume a standard warm-up jog of 15minutes AND Cool-down jog of 15minutes!):
  - o Run 10 x 1minute up a moderate grade (if on treadmill, about 5% grade). Keep your pace even, and then go down easy (if on treadmill, take 1 minute easy before starting the next).
  - o Run 4-5 x a longer (4 to 5minutes) light grade. (If on treadmill, about 3% grade, keeping pace the same as flat running).
  - o Run short, steep hills: 15 x 20seconds STEEP SHORT hills, with a slow walk/jog back down. (If on treadmill, crank it up to 10-12% grade, power out 20seconds, and then recovery about 80seconds before going back to the next).
  - o Run rolling hills. This is easy to do at a place like Bonds Lake or Chestnut ridge: Whenever you hit an UPHILL, PUSH the PACE hard and recover on the downhill. Working the uphill gives a great interval workout.
- ◆ Practice your FORM DRILLS. Yes, you CAN improve your form during the winter months! Learn how to improve your running mechanics by watching some videos.
  - o <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vcH97Dx8VCK> This video shows some great standard running drills. These can be done on the road, in a gym, etc.. Notice how much focus on the GLUTE Muscle!
- ◆ Get in your long run. Once a week allow yourself the enjoyment and time to get out for a longer run. Add on 15minutes or more to your normal weekly run. Enjoy the being spent running.
- ◆ Plan for success. If you see that one day looks better with the weather than another day, plan your run, or longer run, for the nice weather day. There's nothing wrong with planning to have a good run!

STEP 4: Keep a fitness journal. This is a great motivational tool! You can make your own, keep one online, or purchase one at a bookstore/online to record what you've done. This can be just for you, or a bit of bragging rights to your fellow training partners!

## *Keeping Pace with Our Members: Jim Lonergan*

by Denise Kennedy



### **How did you get into running and how long have you been running?**

I did some moderate running as a preteen. My dad was a runner and for a while I ran laps around the block and ran a few 5Ks. When I moved to Buffalo back in 1993-4 I started running again. It started out seasonal and little by little I ended up running all

year long. After a few years of running I decided to run the Turkey Trot (not even confident that I could run that distance) and from there flyers starting coming in the mail for different races. Running a marathon was in the back of my mind but in 1996 I was diagnosed with Ulcerative Colitis and I never was able to get in a training cycle to run that kind of distance. In 2003 I became sick enough that I couldn't run more than a half mile so I gave up trying to run to focus on getting better and fighting this disease. By April of 2004, I was sick, anemic, had lost about 60 lbs and the medications were no longer working. Surgery seemed to be the only option. The first surgery occurred in July of 2004 and the 2nd in November of 2004. I always think of the first surgery as the doctors taking me apart, and the 2nd surgery as the doctors putting me back together. I weighed close to 230 lbs when I was diagnosed in 1996, and when I left the hospital in November 2004 I weighed 134 lbs. I recall the doctor telling me no strenuous activity for 6 weeks. So six weeks and a day later (the day after Christmas 2004) I laced my running sneakers and strapped on my running watch for the first time in over a year. I managed to run about 2 miles over 30 minutes. My shins hurt and I stopped several times but had none of the gastrointestinal problems that plagued me before. Walking back to my house all I could think was, "I am back!!!" I was running 15 minute miles for a while but just to be running again felt good. By March of 2005 I was down to 9 minute paces and I signed up for the Buffalo Marathon. At mile 23 it felt like I had nothing left and I was thinking that this was the stupidest thing I had ever tried to do. My house is right around the 23 mile mark on the Buffalo Marathon course and the thought of calling it quits and walking off the course was strong. I struggled on and made it to the finish line. Sitting on the ground with my back against the Convention Center wall I thought to myself, "I could do that again." I have run 27 marathons since then in 15 different states.

### **What made you join Checkers?**

A few years ago it felt like my running had hit a plateau. I knew different kinds of training runs but I really didn't know if I was doing them correctly. Joining Checkers and running on track seemed like a good way to learn about proper techniques for training.

### **What is your favorite distance to race and why?**

I have always like the longer distance races. I find 5ks to be very stressful and they seem to be over before I am relaxed and ready to run. I enjoy the training as much as I enjoy the races. My thinking is not that I run a lot of miles because I run marathons but rather I run marathons because it is an excuse to run a lot.

### **What made you want to be a photographer for Checkers?**

My work schedule does not leave a lot of time for running races on the weekend and most of my runs are before the sun rises. If I know a race is close to where I live I then I can slip out for an hour or so and click some pictures for the website. When you're in a race you really don't get to see a lot of the runners but when you are on the side of the road taking pictures you really get to see the different dynamics of the race from the elite runners up front to the folks that are just trying to finish their first race.

### **My favorite question, how long have you been a vegan?**

I have been a vegetarian since the early 1990s. Over time I learned more about nutrition and went from eating a very high processed food diet including dairy to a more vegan/plant based diet of mostly whole foods. I had been struggling with some chest congestion for a few years and nothing my doctors suggested seem to help. It didn't seem to slow me down but it was a nagging concern. A few years ago I was interested in learning how to make some nut based milks and received a recipe from the internet on how to make oat milk. I gave it a try for a week and I really thought I would feel sluggish and weak. To my surprise I felt good and within a few days the congestion which I had for years disappeared immediately. Relaying this information to my mother she reminded me that as a baby I had been allergic to milk but around age 5 I became able to tolerate it.

### **And do you have any tips for someone looking to join that lifestyle?**

For anyone considering vegetarianism/vegan-ism or pursuing a plant based diet I would recommend going slow. It is important to consider how your getting your calories and nutrients now and how you will get them when you remove certain food items from your diet. The psychological component can be powerful as well. As you stop eating certain foods your justification for consuming them changes. An obvious example of this is that many folks that become vegetarians quickly admonish others who continue to consume animal based foods. But the psychological impacts can be more subtle. I consumed honey for years as a vegetarian, but after moving towards a more vegan inspired diet the impact of how the bees are treated and how the bees make the honey made the honey very distasteful to me even though the honey itself had not changed. Continued on next page.....

James Lonergan continued.....

Two vitamins to watch closely on a plant based diet are Vitamin B12 and Vitamin D.

### What is your favorite vegan or vegetarian dish?

This is a tough question as in the past few years (particularly since 2009) plant based restaurants or more conventional restaurants offering plant based dishes has increased exponentially. Over the holidays I travel from Buffalo to Florida by car and prior to 1999 I had to load coolers in my car to make sure I had access to food on the trip. Now there are places I can stop all along the way. Locally many restaurants have picked up on this trend as well. The Pizza Plant offers pizza with Diaya (vegan) cheese which is a great treat once in a while. Their staff is always very friendly and very accommodating. The Lexington Co-op has a hot deli bar with many plant based options that you can pick up on the go. At home I enjoy a lot of "greens and beans" based meals that are part raw and cooked to maximize the access to digestive enzymes found in raw foods and the easily digested cooked foods. A typical meal would be raw and marinated collards, kale, onions, carrots, celery and mushrooms topped with cooked lentils, onions, carrots, celery and mushrooms and a sesame seed based dressing.

### Has not eating meat improved your running?

I have run 9 of my fastest marathons on a plant based diet. But at around the same time I joined Checkers and starting training on Coach Mitchell's plans. There are a lot of diet plans out there that folks have been successful on. I think Matt Monarch explained this phenomenon best when he said that it is not likely what people do eat on these plans rather it is what they don't eat that they are most likely benefitting from. What most of these diet plans have in common is that they restrict or limit the amount of highly processed foods consumed. Running 50-60 miles per week I aim for between 2,400 and 3,000 calories per day. This is accomplished over 6-7 meals per day scattered though out the day with an emphasis on greens, beans, seeds and fruit. While greens are loaded with nutrients you can consume 6 pounds of greens and net only about 800 calories. That is a ton of greens which is a lot to chew. I can generally consume about 2-3 pounds of greens by making blended salads which is basically food processing or blending the greens which reduces their volume and the amount of chewing required to consume them. 2-3 blended salads would be the equivalent of consuming the same amount of greens in 7-8 regular salads.



Hospice Half Marathon September 22:  
Congrats Jack on your first half marathon at 80 years young!



On December 12, 2012 - Approximately 40 Checkers members met at the Glen Park Tavern before 6:00 for a drink, then a walk down to the Cabernet Wine Bar on North Ellicott for some snacks, drinks and good fellowship. At around 8:30 pm, the group migrated down to the Eagle House Restaurant for a light late night dinner; and of course, the singing of some holiday songs.



Condolences  
to Sandra  
Hebeler

who's brother passed  
away in November.



Ed Russell received a gift of engraved/autographed wooden spoons at the Freezer 5K for hosting three elite African athletes at the Buffalo Subaru 4 Mile Chase this past summer. Ed was the top Male Most Active Runner in 2012 with about 108 races.



Checkers Track Meet at UB under the lights!



## Four Ironmans in 322 days

by Diane Sardes

It all started November 27, 2011. Some of my Checkers family, along with my biological family, decided to meet in Cozumel for a destination race: The Cozumel Ironman.

As with any Ironman, we began with the 2.4-mile (3.86 km) swim. I had plenty of company. In addition to the swimmers, there were schools of jelly fish. I stayed close to the swimmers in front of me and never had a problem with the little creatures.

Then, it was on to the 112-mile bike ride and the 26-2-mile (marathon) run. The trade winds wreaked havoc on us. The road was littered thanks to the floods from torrential rains, but all in all it was a great experience because, after all, we were in Cozumel! We enjoyed a wonderful vacation after the race.

The first of the year meant a new age group for me. I celebrated by signing up for Ironman Texas. May 19 arrived in no time and there I was, racing again. It was very hot, but I prefer the heat over cold. I remember Ironman Arizona in 2008; it was 42 degrees in the morning and I was getting sick over a garbage can because I didn't want to get into the cold water! For Texas, it was a new age group and a new mind set. Believe it or not, I do these Ironmans just for fun.

I came to Texas ready to compete. It had been a long time since I felt the urge to win I used to feel when I competed in 5ks. The race was underway and someone told me that the first-place female in my age group was just minutes ahead of me. I eventually saw her (ages are marked on the back of our calves) and then passed her. I really wanted to win this Ironman. I knew I had a chance to get back to the World Championship in Kona, Hawaii, not in a roll down like 2008, but as age-group winner!

Everything worked perfectly, my nutrition was great, I ate and stayed hydrated. I crossed that finish line and was so thrilled, I laughed and I cried. I knew I made it all by myself.

Then, my husband, Tony, found me and said, "Sorry honey, you were not first; you were second by just five minutes." I just stared at him. I was so let down. "Okay," I thought, "I still had a good race, my best Ironman ever!" The sadness left me. I was a champ in my own eyes.

Two months passed, and Ironman Louisville was approaching. This race has always been one of my favorites, just like Lake Placid is for so many people. Louisville is easy to get to, it's always warm, and because I had been there twice before, I knew my way around.

When I was in Kona for the World Championships in 2008, I never thought I'd have a chance to return. Louisville was the ticket I needed to get back. My husband said, "Let's go to Hawaii whether you make it or not." After doing so well in Texas, I thought I could make it. Long story short: I finished a half hour slower than Texas, but I still qualified for Kona!

Off to Kona we went, but I needed a goal to motivate me. The woman who beat me in Texas would be at Kona. I decided my first goal was to finish; my second goal was to finish ahead of her.

The race began and I looked up at the navy blue sky with a million beautiful stars. I could not believe I was in Hawaii once again. It was during the marathon when I knew I would finish and I was so happy! It didn't matter where the girl from Texas was, I just kept moving. When I crossed the finish line, the roar was indescribable. Everyone is so supportive. I looked at everyone and said "Thank you."



I get teary eyed when I think about it. It seems even more amazing two months later! I finished 22nd in my age group — and I beat the girl from Texas by a half hour. Missions accomplished!

Tony and I had a great time in Kona. The next morning, we began relaxing and having fun like people do on vacation.

I am wondering again what it would take to get me back to Kona. It's such a wonderful, mysterious place and completely worth the effort. In the meantime, I am enjoying looking at my finishers' medal and the many photos from our trip. I feel grateful and blessed. It's not always about the time in a race.



Date	Race Name	Time
November 27, 2011	Cozumel Ironman	14:44:34
May 19, 2012	Ironman Texas	14:00:09
August 26, 2012	Ironman Louisville	14:31:39
October 13, 2012	World Championship, Kailua-Kona, HI	15:42:59



Thanks to Checkers member Stephen Seerey for directing the 31st year of the **Checkers High School Cross Country Invitational** at Elma Meadows Golf Course. Thanks also to Coach Peter Szymanski for helping high school cross country runners participate by tracking them all year long.

A special thank you to Kathy Sinicropi, and Karen Crissey who have been the race's magnificent registration and scoring duo over the past 16 years. Checkers volunteers also show up each year to run the course before the race to ensure it is clear of any hazards. Their help allows the 9 finish line to run smoothly!

Thank you to *Runners Roost* for your wonderful support for yet another successful year.

A Turkey Trot warm-up.

November 11  
The Inaugural Veterans Day  
5K Run



Checkers families at the Turkey Trot



## President's Corner *by Tom Donnelly*



### A journey of 26.2 miles begins with the first step

Every so often, I enjoy reminiscing about how I went from being completely inactive in my early 20s to becoming a full-fledged runner.

In 1976, I tipped the scales at more than 200 lbs. and I was having a hard time climbing two flights of stairs without becoming winded. There were a lot of firsts for me those days, and they bring back some interesting memories.

My first run, for example, was painful, difficult, and somewhat demoralizing. I remember running about a quarter-mile. I was out of breath when I turned around to walk home. It was such a challenge, but I became obsessed with getting better at it. Things got better gradually and I was able to run a little farther every few days.

The first time I made it all the way to Delaware Park was a milestone accomplishment for me — literally. The park was a mile from my home, so by getting there and back home, I was up to two miles right off the bat. Back in 1976, there weren't many runners in the park, but even then, the park was known as a hub for runners (some referred to it as a "hot spot"). I arrived one day, ran a few light poles and turned around to head home. From that point on, I knew I had a destination I could reach and a few other runners to share time with once I got there.

My first bad-weather run was January 28, 1977. The snow was flying and the winds were gusting upwards of 70 mph. The college turned us loose early that day and Western New Year was soon buried under several feet of snow. Having some unexpected extra time on my hands, I decided to head over to Delaware Park to get in some miles. My run was cut short by extremely strong winds and drifting snow blocking the road. It never occurred to me that these conditions could be a deterrent to getting in my run. I sensed that day I was becoming a true runner.

My first race was in May 1977. It was a 20K held along the escarpment near Niagara-on-the-Lake. Back then, 10Ks and five milers were the norm. 5Ks were confined to the track in collegiate or international competition. I survived the 20K despite the mile climb in the last third of the race. I couldn't wait for the next race, which was more than a month away. Boy, the race calendar sure has changed in the last 35 years.

I ran my first marathon, the Skylon International Marathon, in October 1977. It's pretty much the same course as today's Niagara Falls Marathon. My goal was to qualify for Boston, which at the time was sub three hours. I had the good fortune to be paired up with my brother's Belle Watling club mate Richard Sullivan, who was the group's pace marshal. Richard was a scant 50 years young at the time and had plenty of energy that day. One by one, he wore us all down as he cruised to a PR of 2:53. I lost him at around mile 16, but I hung on to finish south of 3 hours — with 13 seconds to spare. As I was being carted away from the finish line, I thought, "What an easy game this is."

My first Boston was April 1978. I traveled to Beantown with my brother and joined up with a group of Belle Watlings. They were all over 40, with quite a few in their 50s. I couldn't imagine how they could even attempt a marathon at that age. We had a group photo taken at the Sullivan water tower near the start line in Hopkinton. I look at that photo now and think, "This pack of shiftless-looking runners with their tattered cotton sweats and dingy running singlets look more like poster boys for a homeless shelter." The final results were a different story. The winner among this bunch came in at 2:17; second, 2:21; third, 2:25; there were many 2:30-somethings; a few 2:40-somethings; and me at 2:53. The Watlings allowed me to tag along for the post-race party back at the hotel in spite of having to wait a bit for me to finish. I thought, "If these old coots could run like this, I could — with a little time and some more miles under my belt — be running the Olympic marathon." I must confess that never did quite happen.

Naturally, the first running club I joined was Belle Watling. I was welcomed in as Bill Donnelly's younger, slower brother. It was a great experience being a part of a running club. We spent little time actually working out together, unless you count consuming ample amounts of beer as a workout. But we had many great road trips and many lasting memories.

After a couple years with the Belle Watlings, I was wooed away by an upstart running club. This club's goal was to promote Western New York as a serious running community. Continued on back page.....

## President's Corner *continued*

I was good friends with many of the 20 or so members. They called themselves the Greater Buffalo Track Club. I think it was more a result of my bonds with the group than my running prowess that got me the invitation to join. Either way, I stayed with that club for the next 20 years, many of which were in a leadership role. By the time I left, all the original members were long gone. The club had changed quite a bit over those years, and I would say in very good ways.

In 2000, I was looking for a change and an opportunity to participate in an organized track program, so I joined Checkers. The people and programs really appealed to me. The best part is that I didn't have anything to do with the club's leadership. I needed a break from that responsibility and Checkers had plenty of good leaders. A dozen years later, and look where I am.

As 2012 comes to an end, I look at how Checkers has changed since I joined. We have grown in membership. We offer more and more programs; there's something for everyone — from the top performers to the beginners. I can't say enough about Zero to 5k, where we help sedentary folks off the couch and across 5K finish lines and beyond. I look at our beginners this year and it brings me back to 1976. I appreciate your journeys. There are lots of firsts coming your way, hopefully with as many lasting memories as I have had.

My wish to all of you is to enjoy the excitement in every first you experience. No matter how experienced you are, there's always a first for something. Best of luck finding them and reveling in them in 2013.



# HAVE A WONDERFUL SEASON!

