

Katelyne Van Mourik
Runner of the Month for August 2012

It is our plan to feature one person who ran our 5k each month between now and the 2013 Evart 4th of July 5k. We will be selecting walkers or runners who might be fast, or slow. They might be from Evart or elsewhere. Each one of us who participated in the 5k has a unique story to tell. It is our hope that by sharing these stories we can help each other in some way in our endeavors as runners or walkers. We will always obtain permission to feature each of our participants.

The featured runner for August is Katelyne Van Mourik. Katelyne has been selected to be our initial feature for a variety of reasons.

Katelyne is an excellent runner. As a cross country runner at Evart High School Kate advanced to the MHSAA State Finals twice. This past season, 2011, she finished 12th in the Division 4 race in the fine time of 19:36. In track Kate finished 2nd at State in the 400 meter run in 60.58. She also anchored the 400 meter relay team which finished 4th. In many regular season meets Katelyne competed in events ranging from the 100 meter dash to the mile. She could have excelled in any event the coach could have put her in and probably would have been enthusiastic about trying them all.

At the Evart 4th of July 5k Katelyne had a rough day. It was probably a combination of going out a bit too fast (at 1.5 miles she was well ahead of all other women in the race), the heat, and a pothole. Anyway, she finished in 25:31, 6th in her age group.

On Tuesday evening, July 24, at about 9:30 PM, Katelyne was struck by a car as she was riding her bike. At the time of this writing Katelyne is at Butterworth Hospital in Grand Rapids, in a coma, and fighting for her life. She is a strong person, both physically and mentally, and this will certainly work in her favor. Your thoughts and prayers for this fellow athlete are appreciated.

Ron Sabins

Runner of the Month for September 2012

The September Featured Runner is Ron Sabins. Ron is 70 years old and has been running for 38 years. His first run was on January 12, 1975. At that time Ron weighed about 215 pounds. He was soon at a much more efficient 170, feeling better both physically and mentally. "Running," says Ron, "gave me a

feeling of well-being which continues even now.”

Ron averages about 20-25 miles a week and runs mostly by himself. He enjoys running alone, but if someone is there to run with, he enjoys the company as well. Ron's PR's include 23:20 for 5k, 43:41 for 10k, and 4:15 for the marathon. He also has run an ultra, doing a 31 mile (50k) in Muncie, Indiana in 5:40. 20 years ago Ron did a 10 mile race in Ohio in 1:20. Recently he ran the same race in 1:30.

Ron likes to vary his training routine, rotating between doing a tempo run one day, a long run as his next workout, and following that with speed work. Recently he has been going to the track to do some of his speed work. Currently Ron works out every other day. Time off, he believes, gets more important with age.

Ron lives from April to November in his motor home on Strawberry Lake near Evert. In the winter he returns to his native Ohio. Ron commented that his last pair of running shoes cost him more than his first car. As the winner of the 60 and over age group at the Evert 4th of July 5k Ron is undoubtedly still running better than that car!

The Wirkutis Family

Runners/Walkers of the Month for October 2012

This month we are featuring Mike and Patti Wirkutis. Mike and Patti, ages 64 and 59 respectively, walked the Evert 4th of July 5k with their adult kids Mike Jr., 31, and Rebekah, 19. Patti must have picked up the pace near the end as official times reveal that she finished in 57:29 while the other family members were 58:54, 58:55, and 58:56.

Mike and Patti began walking in April with the intent of preparing for the July 4 5k. They have exercised in a variety of ways throughout much of their adult lives. Some of their favorite activities have included biking, racquetball, softball, zumba, and swimming. Walking, specifically for exercise, was new to them. Since the 5k Mike and Patti have continued to walk and now routinely walk as much as five miles a day.

In addition to providing fitness, walking has turned into a way to relieve stress and enjoy the outdoors. “We just feel better afterwards,” says Patti. “Unfortunately,” she adds, “it has not yet led to weight loss.” They prefer walking together and currently are averaging about 20 miles a week.

In their younger years Mike and Patti would have loved to run the 5k. Although Mike has done some running and was an excellent athlete in his youth, knee problems prevent him from running now. Like many folks in this age group, Mike and Patti have faced and overcome their share of health problems. The opportunity to participate in the Evert 4th of July 5k as a family was an emotional experience for Patti. "It was a big deal for me," she said, "and actually made me tear up."

Mike and Patti plan on walking as a routine activity as long as they hold up physically. Patti says, "The 5k was great, and yes, it would be fun to run with friends and family. But, at least we are moving, maintaining our weight, and feeling good."

The Wirkutis family was one of many families that participated in the 2012 Evert 4th of July 5k. We hope they all maintain their fitness and return to walk or run again next year.

Tisa Thompson

Runner of the Month for November 2012

Tisa Thompson of Byron Center, Michigan is our Featured Runner for November. Tisa was the winner of the women's race at the Evert 4th of July 5k in a time of 23:19, a scant three seconds ahead of second place, in one of the closest races of the day.

Tisa began running while in high school, about 15 years ago. She started in order to stay in shape during the high school soccer off-season, running the halls with soccer teammates and the in-season wrestling team. Running with the wrestling team provided "pretty good motivation" to maintain a high level of fitness.

Tisa has always been an active person and says that running, and exercise in general, helps her feel better mentally, emotionally, and physically. "When I slack off on my exercising, I definitely feel more tired." She consistently runs about 20-30 miles a week but will increase that while training for a specific event.

Personal records include 22:59 for 5k, set at the Spectrum Health 5k in Reed City, and 2:14:41 for 25k, set at the Fifth Third Riverbank Run in Grand Rapids. Tisa ran the Detroit Marathon in 2006, finishing in 4:18:01. Interestingly, on

that day she intended to run the half marathon, but it was full. So she signed up for and ran the full marathon.

Tisa enjoys walking with others, but prefers to run alone. She does, however, enjoy running with her younger brother, Trevan. She describes him as a "machine," someone who might not have run in months, but will go out and run as far as 13 miles with her, just to keep her company. Tisa describes her running as "a great opportunity for me to get away and make time for myself and God."

Long runs are Tisa's favorite aspect of training. She says, "I love long runs on the back two-track dirt roads, with trees that form a canopy over the road. Those are my favorite places to run, especially in the fall, because it's beautiful and peaceful." I think those of us who routinely run the roads and trails of Michigan would agree.

Grace Hamilton

Runner of the Month for December 2012

Our featured runner for December is Grace Hamilton. At the 2012 Evert 4th of July 5k Grace was the second female finisher. She ran 23:22, finishing three seconds behind winner Tisa Thompson. Grace is a junior at Evert High School and runs on the cross country and track teams. During this past cross country season Grace qualified for the state finals as an individual and ran her personal best of 20:46 at the state meet. Last spring in track Grace qualified for the state finals where she ran her personal best 3200 m (2 miles) of 12:36. Grace does it the way it should be done; her best times in the most important meets!

Grace started running about a year and a half ago when she decided to participate in track her freshman year. Originally her purpose in going out for track was to hang out with friends but that soon changed. Grace discovered that she not only enjoyed running but also liked the competition, the goal setting, and even the hard work.

"Running," Grace says, "introduced me to amazing friends and it is a fun way to stay in shape and healthy." At this time Grace runs about 30 miles a week. She often likes to run alone, especially if she is stressed or needs time to think. But, sometimes, she loves running with friends or even with her dad. The longest run Grace has done is 10 miles. Her favorite workout is mile repeats. The workout consists of three one mile repetitions, as fast as possible, with a

three minute rest interval between each one. She likes the mile repeat workout because, "It feels so good when you are done and it helps a lot with your endurance."

Grace has not yet run a marathon, or a 10k for that matter, but she plans on doing the longer races, including the marathon, after her high school competitions are over.

Grace is an extremely focused and goal oriented person. She sets her goals high and is willing to work hard to achieve them. Presently Grace's goals include running 5k in cross country under 20:00 and 3200 m in track under 12:00. From one who knew little about running and competition a year and a half ago, Grace is well on her way to achieving her goals. She has also, over the last year and a half, become one of us; one of the brothers and sisters, young and old, who make up the running community.

The Willems' Family

Runners/Walkers of the Month for January 2013

To start the new year we are featuring the brother/sister team of Beck (8) and Zoe Willems (6) who walked the 2012 Evart 4th of July 5k. Yes, their parents participated as well, Mom Cori running the 5k in 26 and change, winning her age group, and Dad Hank walking with the kids. According to the stories Dad was extremely sore in the days after the 5k. But, this article is not about Mom and Dad. It is about Beck Willems and Zoe Willems who walked identical times; 42:28.1.

Both Beck and Zoe are active kids. Beck plays on soccer, basketball, and baseball teams depending on the season. When he is not involved in organized activity Beck and his neighborhood buddies are riding bike, playing anything that involves running around, and just generally having a great, exhausting time. Zoe plays organized soccer, softball, and takes gymnastics lessons. She also stays active with friends in the neighborhood in her free time. These kids do not sit in front of video games all day, although they enjoy the Xbox 360 they got for Christmas.

At the 2012 Evart 4th of July 5k Beck and Zoe walked a remarkably even pace. There might have been a little coaching from Dad as they started out, but soon the pace was set. They were somewhere around midway in the pack at a half mile and, as Dad says, had moved up to sixth place by the time they hit the two

mile mark. Being naturally competitive kids, it was then that Beck and Zoe began trying to pass other walkers. Fourth, third, second, then they were in first! They had passed them all.

As Beck and Zoe walked down Main Street heading for the final turn and the finish line, their minds must have wandered a bit, looking at the parade activity going on all around, or possibly Dad's whining was a distraction. Whatever the cause, just short of the finish line they got passed! At that point Dad must have been too tired to do any coaching. Beck and Zoe finished third and fourth after being passed by two ladies. Both Beck and Zoe were fastest in their age groups and were happy to get their well-deserved ribbons and a lot of cold stuff to drink on the hot, hot day.

Beck and Zoe Willems walked the 2012 Evert 4th of July 5k at a pace of 13:42 per mile. Now that's some fast walking! And they are my grandkids.

Charlie Mouch

Runner of the Month for February 2013

Our featured runner for the month of February is Charlie Mouch. Charlie was 22 years old at the 2012 Evert 4th of July 5k and comes from Troy, Michigan. He was the overall winner of Evert's first 5k. On a day when conditions were not conducive to fast times, he ran close to his PR of 16:17, finishing in 16:27.

Charlie's family was well represented as his parents (Tim and Martha), his brother (Sandy), and Sandy's girlfriend (Jaclyn Di Bartolomeo) also participated.

A sister, who also runs, could not do the 5k because she was working at Springhill on July 4.

Charlie credits his dad as "the person who first encouraged me to run." Dad's motive was to help Charlie do well on the Presidential Physical Fitness test at school. Charlie loved the short runs with his dad and decided to run track his 6th grade year. Although he tried other events, Charlie found that he enjoyed the distance runs. He continued running in high school, primarily as a tool to get in shape for soccer. As time passed Charlie discovered that his running was becoming less about preparing for soccer and more about his pure enjoyment of the activity and spending time with fellow runners. He got hooked on the racing aspect of distance running while at the University of Michigan where he competed four years on the Michigan Running Club. As Charlie says, "I was able to meet some incredible friends and travel around the Midwest for weekend races." As a medical student now, Charlie now finds that he must plan his training time carefully.

Charlie feels that running helps him focus and maintain a high level of energy during his busy days. Running is a "constant" in his schedule and he "certainly notices" if his running becomes inconsistent. Charlie also feels that running has taught him "a lot about mental toughness and the power of a positive attitude" in regard to approaching challenges. One of Charlie's favorite quotes is "your attitude determines your altitude."

Charlie usually trains between 20-40 miles a week. At this time 50 seems to be the point of diminishing returns as he tends to develop injuries if he runs more than that. He prefers to run alone if it has been a busy day, but other times, especially on long runs, he enjoys company. Most of Charlie's runs become tempo runs or hill workouts. As Charlie says, "I love the feeling of being on cruise control, going comfortably fast at a pace I know I can keep for a while. Tempos give me a lot of confidence, and it is just plain fun to run fast, but not fast enough to really hurt too bad. I like the motivation that hill workouts provide – there is always that little voice in your head that won't let you stop until you get to the top." Charlie also considers playing soccer to be an essential ingredient in his training. "It's also nice to change the pace of things and play such a creative, flowing sport," he says.

Charlie's PR for 10k is 32:51. He has not yet run a marathon but is starting to think about it. Last October he ran a half marathon and finished second overall with a fine time of 1:14:58. Charlie has also run The Fred, a 6-person, 200 mile relay from Grand Rapids to Cadillac and back on the White Pine Trail. In this event he ran more than 32 miles in a time span of 22 hours.

As you can see Charlie is a great ambassador for the sport of distance running. He is an excellent example of what I refer to as a "recreationally competitive runner," one who takes his sport very seriously and at the same time keeps it in proper perspective. He understands both the benefits he receives and the responsibilities he takes on as someone who is very good at his sport.

If you want to run near the front of the 5k in 2013, look for Charlie's star spangled, red, white, and blue running shorts. Then keep up!

Doug Swartzendruber
Runner of the Month for March 2013

Our Featured Runner for March is Doug Swartzendruber. At the 2012 Evert 4th of July 5k Doug was 66 years old and finished second in the 60 and over age group in a time of 29:47. As a semi-retired college teacher, Doug is either

traveling the world for Pepperdine University or at home in Boulder, Colorado where he trains at high altitude. As one of the fittest cities in the United States, and one of the main centers of running activity in the country, Boulder offers Doug plenty of opportunity to stay in shape.

Doug began running "a little over 30 years ago," but his primary sport has always been basketball. When he was in high school Doug played for the New Paris (Indiana) Cubs, a school about the same size as the school in the movie HOOSIERS. Doug took up running as an activity in itself because of a bet with his brother-in-law. "While recovering from a holiday meal. My brother-in-law and I thought we had better go for a run. We were not particularly successful and decided that a challenge was in order. My brother-in-law took it seriously and quickly became one of the top runners in the region, and I pretty much kept playing basketball." Doug has continued to run off and on as his schedule permits and has maintained his fitness level so well over the years that he still plays basketball regularly and holds his own against players 30 years younger.

Doug credits running as the activity that has helped him control the weight gain that naturally occurs with advancing age. He has not had to change his diet much in order to accomplish this. Doug says that his extended family has quite a few heavy folks and that he consciously tries not to go down that path. At this time Doug runs several days a week and walks on most of the other days. Though Boulder is blessed with many, many runners, Doug usually runs alone. He doesn't "mind running alone" but has, in different situations, routinely run with a small group of close friends. Running on trails is Doug's favorite workout. He particularly enjoys running on the Barr Trail (Pikes Peak), the Garden of the Gods in Colorado Springs, or on Mt. Sanitas in Boulder, describing these runs as a combination of a "good workout and an adventure."

Doug's personal record for 5k is 18:49 and for 10k "just under 40:00." Doug has run several marathons. He has run the incredibly tough Pikes Peak Marathon where the Ascent (half marathon) is considered to be about equal in time to a regular marathon. His best Ascent time is 3:42. Doug also did the round trip on Pikes Peak in slightly under 7 hours, and has also run the Las Vegas Marathon and Grandma's Marathon in Duluth, Minnesota, both in the 3:50's.

Doug plans to make the journey from Colorado to Evert again next 4th of July to run our race. He says that Evert is "a great place to visit and the 4th of July 5k is one of the most enjoyable" events he has done," even though "it was a tad hot" last year.

Kraig Bennett
April 2013 Runner of the Month

Our featured runner for April is Kraig Bennett. Kraig was 40 years old at the 2012 Evert 4th of July 5k where he covered the distance in 35:14. He has lived his whole life in Evert. A runner for about four years, Kraig usually does about 10 miles a week, fitting his running in between many other interests and obligations. He is an avid sports fan, baseball in particular, and he could tell you most statistics for Detroit Tiger players for many, many years. I have been told by reliable sources that Kraig is an avid fan of former Tiger Brandon Inge.

Kraig began running partly because a friend urged him to. He also was motivated internally by a desire to lose weight and get in better shape. He says now that running helped him "lose weight, eat better (than he was before he started), and feel better." One common denominator shared by many of the runners or walkers that I have written about in these features is that many have experienced these same three benefits from running or walking.

Kraig enjoys running both alone and with other people. Some days it's nice to have someone to talk with and other days it's nice just to be alone. He doesn't run many road races and didn't set out to compete with others at the Evert 4th of July 5k. He simply tried to maintain a pace that tested his own conditioning.

A marathon might be in Kraig's future. He is aware that he would need to do more running than he now does, but says he would "like to run one eventually." His favorite workout is to "run a good 2-4 miles." The longest run Kraig has done is 10 miles.

Kraig is like many folks. He runs for the benefits of the activity and enjoys a race every now and then. His mother Judy Bennett walked the 5k making the Bennetts another of our family participants. In both years of the Evert 4th of July 5k's existence Kraig has been one of the very first people to sign up and is looking forward to participating in the 2013 5k.

Allison Babb
May 2013 Runner of the Month

Allison Babb is our featured runner for the month of May. At the 2012 Evert 4th of July 5k Allison was 23 years old. She ran a fine time of 25:59 in our race and was the winner of the 19-24 age group.

Allison began running 11 years ago as a seventh grader. She was on the track team and competed in the sprint events. She has vivid memories of her middle school track experience and also remembers looking forward to track and field days as an elementary student where she managed to "come home with a few first place ribbons."

After graduating from high school Allison started running longer distance to stay in shape. She had always maintained a well balanced diet so she did not need to make any drastic changes in that area. Allison had always been an active person so beginning to run greater distance did not result in significant weight loss. She has continued eating a healthy diet and has been working out routinely since high school. She says that she has been "fortunate to keep (her) weight about the same since high school."

Allison has had to deal with knee problems and has had two ACL repairs. She tends to run most during the spring and summer months and, in consideration of her knees, stays active on an elliptical or in some other non-weight bearing form of cardio activity in the winter. Allison averages about seven or eight miles a week of running during the summer.

She prefers to run alone because "I find it's a great time to think about my day, have some alone time, and relieve stress." Allison does not really consider herself to be a distance runner, just someone who runs some distance as part of an overall training program. She prefers trail running "in the evening after a long day." She says it's a great time to "clear your head and listen to the sounds of nature."

Allison says that she would run more miles if she could build her knees up to a point that would allow it. Her longest run so far has been about six miles. For someone who does not consider herself to be a distance runner," Allison's PR of 23:24 for 5k is very impressive. She does not really expect to ever run a marathon but rather thinks about the possibility of someday expanding her mileage to a point that would allow her to run a half marathon.

Allison is currently finishing her last semester at Saginaw Valley State University as an exercise science major. She will have a minor in biology. Allison will start graduate school in May at Central Michigan University where she will be working on a doctorate in physical therapy. Since graduating from Evart High School, fitness has grown to become an important part of her life. She has taught Zumba fitness classes in Evart for the last two years and has also been teaching Zumba, Pilates, and kickboxing as an adjunct faculty member at SVSU for the past year. Allison enjoys sharing her enthusiasm for fitness by helping others "enjoy and benefit from exercise" as much as she does.

David Zinger, Max Hodges, Santana Scott & Zack Douglas
June 2013 Runners of the Month

This article, the last before the 2013 4th of July 5k, features four young men who ran the 2012 5k and are also members of the Division 4 State Cross Country runner-up team from Evert High School. David Zinger ran 17:15 at our 5k, then 15:52 to lead the Evert team at the State Meet. Max Hodges covered our 5k course in 17:58 and was the second Evert runner at State in 16:20. Santana Scott ran 20:00 on the 4th of July and 16:52 at State. Last but not least, Zack Douglas was 20:08 on the 4th and 17:42 at the State Meet. David is currently a senior, Max is a junior, Santana is a freshman, and Zack is a junior. So, despite losing David to graduation (and Logan Hammer, another top notch runner who was out of town for the 2012 4th of July 5k), the future looks bright for Wildcat cross country teams.

These guys are relatively new to the sport of distance running as you would expect. They all began in middle school, each because of different circumstances. David volunteered to run the 3200 as a 7th grader at a track meet when nobody else would step forward. He ran a fine time of 12:32 and the rest is history. Max started as an 8th grader when high school cross country coach (and middle school track coach) Andy Eichelberger noticed his endurance and convinced him to run cross country as a freshman in high school. Santana began in 7th grade when he ran cross country. After running pretty far back in the pack for quite a while, he discovered that it was more fun to be up front. Zack got his start as a distance runner after trying sprints in track, finding that he did not have the speed to compete as well as he wanted. Then he tried the longer distances.

As of this writing David's PR for 5k is 15:47, Max's PR is 16:21, Santana's is 16:52, and Zack's is 17:42. On the track the Evert boys have also been hard to beat with PR's as follows for the mile (1600m) and two mile (3200m) respectively: David 4:23 and 9:40; Max 4:30 and 9:55; Santana 4:46 and 10:21; and Zack 5:11 and 10:51. All four guys realize they are new to running but would like to run a marathon someday. When told that the best marathoners in the world run 26.2 miles at close to 4:45 per mile, one of these guys responded by suggesting that maybe he could run one averaging 4:44 per mile! When you stop and think about it, someone WILL run the marathon faster than it's ever been run before, and it WILL be a young person just like David, Max, Santana, and Zack.

These young men have experienced many of the same benefits from running

that have been reported in previous articles. David credits running with "giving me a lifestyle." Max says running has given him self-confidence, "It's something I know I'm good at." Santana says that running has helped him through an awkward stage, that he "was socially awkward, but with cross country and track, I am no longer." For Zack running has been a tool for fitness. He says, "I feel like it can prepare you for any sport."

Let me explain a little about cross country. The team score is found by adding the places of each team's first five runners. Low score wins, like golf. So, if your team finishes in places 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, your score would be 15 and you would beat the tar out of all the other teams. In a meet like the State Meet where there are over 300 runners, your team could have four runners place very high, but if your 5th runner is way back in the pack, you would not end up with a good team score. So it has to be a total team effort. At the State Meet every member of the Evert team ran a PR (or very close to it) and placed as high as they possibly could have hoped to. If any one of these guys had not run as well as they did, the team would not have placed close to 2nd. So, your 5th runner is as important as your 1st. Also, at a meet like the State Meet, there are so many runners than you never know how your team placed for sure until it is announced.

I asked these young men how it felt when they were announced as the runner-up team and stood on the awards stand. They all expressed great happiness that began immediately after the race because they knew they had run well, but surprise when they realized their performance was good for 2nd place, and that they had risen up on the most important day of the season and beaten teams they had lost to previously. They felt pride in the fact that everyone on the team had performed up to his potential. Tears flowed with the overwhelming joy of success and accomplishment.

David, Max, Santana, and Zack all said that the cross country team is like a second family and that Coach Ike (Andy Eichelberger), who resigned after 13 years, has been a father figure, friend, and role model. When you see these four and Coach Ike at the 2013 4th of July 5k be sure to congratulate them. And, I'd like to believe that their participation in the Evert 4th of July 5k played a small role in their preparation for such a tremendous cross country season.

JASON KINCAID

August 2013 Runner of the Month

Our first featured runner from the 2013 Evert 4th of July 5k is Jason Kincaid.

Jason came to Evart to do the 5k from Goshen, Indiana. He is 41 years old and is the pastor at First Assembly of God Church in Goshen. The 4th of July 5k was Jason's first race. He ran a time of 27:54 and had a lot of fun in the process. His whole family, wife Kim and daughters Cree, Sage, Emry, and Brae did the 5k walk. Since the walk started 30 minutes before the run, they were at the finish line waiting for him, having completed the walk just minutes before Jason arrived.

Jason has only been running for about four months. Several years ago he was diagnosed with diabetes and at some point since then came to grips with the importance of exercise in controlling it. After the diagnosis, Jason became increasingly concerned about his health. Since initiating a program of exercise, with running as its core, he has lost 30 pounds. He says he has acquired a "desire to eat healthy, for the sake of my health, and to better fuel my body for exercise." Jason adds that he is feeling much better both physically and mentally since starting this exercise program.

Jason averages about 15 miles of running a week. He also works out on an elliptical machine and does weight training as well. He usually prefers to run alone, but sometimes is accompanied by his wife. The longest run that Jason has done to date is 6.1 miles. Building up to that in the relatively short time of four months is impressive. Since our 5k was Jason's first, his 27:54 is his personal best. Jason would like to increase his running mileage, and although it seems like a distant goal at this point, he would like to do a marathon if he can ever reach the mileage to achieve it. His favorite workout is an up-tempo run for as long as he can hold the pace.

Jason's progress in combating diabetes is testament to the power of eating well and training. "When I first found out I was diabetic," he says, "my a1c was 12.8 with a typical blood sugar level of 400-450. This is very high and very dangerous. After four months of the diet (whole foods) and exercise program, I recently found out that my a1c is now 6.5 (5.8 – 6.5 is considered healthy and 5.8 and below is considered non-diabetic) and my average blood sugar level is around 100 – 110."

Now, I don't even know what "a1c" is or what it stands for, but it sure sounds good. Way to go, Jason.

MATT PEACOCK

September 2013 Runner of the Month

The featured runner for September is Matt Peacock. Matt, currently a

sophomore at the University of Saint Francis in Joliet, Illinois, was the overall winner of the 2013 Evart 4th of July 5k. His time of 15:34 was 25 seconds better than the second place finisher. Matt's mother, Kristi, was the winner of the 50-54 age group in the fine time of 26:01. His dad, Dennis, principal at Evart High School, would have run but could not due to an injury. He was on hand, however, to cheer everyone on.

Matt says that he has been running "pretty much as long as I can remember." Born to parents who were both runners, Matt remembers running in 5k's with his dad until he (Matt, that is) got tired, then riding the stroller for a while, then running again. Matt says that he has loved the feeling of running his entire life. "There is something about pushing your body and mind to the limit that makes you feel alive."

Matt is presently running around 70 miles a week as a member of the Saint Francis cross country team. He prefers to run with his team instead of alone. "Running with a team," he says, "is an experience that is impossible to describe. A pack of 15 guys working towards one common goal is a very powerful experience." Matt's weekly long run is usually 15 or 16 miles which he typically does on Sundays, and his longest run to date is 17 miles. His favorite workout is a cruise interval session which consists of running 8-12 1000 meter repeats at 3:05 per 1000 with a 45 second rest interval between.

Matt's PR for 5k was set at the 2013 Evart 4th of July 5k, and is 15:34. He has not run a 10k since his high school days. Matt has been plagued by stress fractures during his college career and one of his immediate goals is to be injury free this year. At the college level his races in cross country are 8k, approximately 5 miles. His goal at this distance is 24:40 and he also has his sights set on running a 14:30 5k. Matt has had the privilege of running on a Saint Francis cross country team which won the NAIA National Championship in 2012. He hopes to help the team repeat as champions, establish himself as a top five runner on the Saint Francis team, and become an All-American this year.

Matt has not yet run a marathon but plans to take that distance on after his college years. His ultimate goal in the marathon is to someday qualify for the USA Olympic Marathon Trials. Standards for qualifying to run in the United States Olympic Marathon Trials for the 2012 Olympics were as follows: 1) run the marathon (26.2 miles) in two hours 19 minutes, a pace of 5:18 per mile, or 2) run a half marathon in 1:05, a pace of 4:57 per mile, or 3) run a 10k in 28:30, a pace of 4:36 per mile. In 2012 only 160 American men met this standard. For the 2016 Olympics the marathon qualifying time will be lowered to 2:18 and the 10k qualifier will be dropped. As you can see, those who qualify to run the USA Olympic Marathon Trials form an extremely elite group.

One of the unique things about running in general and races like our 4th of July 5k is that athletes of all abilities can participate, each at his/her own level. We hope Matt can return next year to defend his title here in Evert.

The McLachlan Family October 2013 Runners/Walkers of the Month

For the month of October we are featuring walkers Kay and Sterling McLachlan. Sterling, age 79, and Kay, age 76, were the oldest participants in the 2013 Evert 4th of July 5k. Kay finished the 5k in 56:31 and Sterling in 56:35. Although the walking division of the 5k is non-competitive, both were the fastest in their age group. Daughter Brenda McCauley and granddaughter Ashley McCauley walked the 5k with Sterling and Kay, pushing great-granddaughter Emma in a stroller. Many folks made the Evert 4th of July 5k a family event, but Sterling and Kay probably hold the record for the number of generations participating with four.

Kay and Sterling have been walking for exercise off and on for about 20 years. Kay described walking as simply something to do while Sterling mentioned how regular walking helps keep his cholesterol low. The McLachlan's usually walk three or four times a week totaling more than 10 miles. They try to exercise whenever it is possible, but sometimes their busy schedule keeps them from getting it done. Kay and Sterling enjoy walking together, preferably in the morning, but they will do it at other times when they have to.

To prepare for the 2013 4th of July 5k Sterling measured and marked a distance of 1.75 miles on the Rails to Trails Bike Path here in Evert. He says they might have had to work up to walking the entire distance "a little bit, but not much." Kay and Sterling trained for the 4th of July 5k by covering this marked distance (longer than 5k) as often as possible.

The longest walk Kay and Sterling have taken happened as somewhat of an accident. One Mothers' Day they rode their motorcycle to Houghton Lake then decided to go to Cadillac and walk around Lake Cadillac. Someone had told them it was about four miles. They both had fun but were ready to be done after completing the 7.5 mile trip around the lake.

Sterling entered the first (2012) Evert 4th of July 5k but medication he was taking kept him from completing the 5k distance. This year, off the medication and with Kay, Brenda, Ashley, and Emma with him, he says "everything worked better." Kay and Sterling have not entered any organized 5k's besides ours, but have considered doing others in the area.

Kay and Sterling look forward to doing the 5k next 4th of July. While walking 5k at around 18:00 per mile was quite an accomplishment for Kay and Sterling, getting four generations of one family together to walk the 5k was probably even greater. We look forward to seeing the McLachlans at the 2014 5k.

Sandy and Macey Wallace November 2013 Walker/Runner of the Month

For the month of November we are featuring the mother/daughter team of Sandy (mother) and Macey Wallace of Evert. Sandy entered the walk and was the fastest walker in her age group at 42:55 or 13:51 per mile, while Macey finished third in the 13 and under age group, running just under 8:00 per mile.

Sandy has been walking for exercise for about two and a half years. Like many folks she started due to some health issues and for weight control. At this time she is 30 pounds lighter than before she started. Sandy credits her exercise regimen and a change of diet for the positive changes. Macey, now in eighth grade, began running as a fifth grader. She runs middle school cross country and track, and acknowledges that her dad helped her running career get underway.

Sandy usually walks about 12-15 miles a week while Macey says she averages about 10. Sandy prefers to walk alone, but adds that she also likes to walk with friends to "catch up." When Macey is practicing with the cross country or track team she is, of course, running with friends. In the off-season, however, she does run at times with other people, most often her dad. Sandy's longest walk to date is 5k while Macey has run as much as four miles.

Sandy and Macey both say that they would like to try the marathon distance someday. Sandy emphasizes that she would walk. "I am just not a runner," she says. Macey says that she might like to run a marathon someday, "just to see if I could." Speed walking is something that Sandy really likes to do. She says it gives her energy and is also a great stress reliever. Macey's favorite workout is a long slow run, "because I just enjoy it." Sandy's goal is to keep walking and maintain the healthy lifestyle and weight loss she has achieved. Macey says her goal is to run 5k in 21:00. As an observer of high school cross country, I think she will probably achieve that goal next year as a ninth grader.

Sandy shared a couple of ideas which are appropriate for runners or walkers, either just starting out in competitive running like Macey, or as an adult working to stay fit like she is.

"In order to succeed we must first believe that we can."

"Never say it can't be done. If you put your mind to it you will succeed."

Success is relative to your goals. Goals, for people who participate in road races or walks, can be very different. So, there is no reason to wait. Get started. You can succeed. Thanks Sandy and Macey. We hope to see you next year on the 4th of July.

The Harding Family

Jeff, Lisa, Emily, Molly, Tyler and Kelsey
December 2013 - Runners of the Month

For the month of December we are featuring the Harding family of Manton, Michigan. Jeff (38), Lisa (38), and four of their kids, Emily (10), Molly (9), Tyler (7), and Kelsey (5), all ran the 5k. Jeff and Lisa, both accomplished runners, ran with their kids at our 5k, turning the event into a true family adventure. Molly, accompanied by Jeff, ran 30:28. Emily ran the 5k in 41:57, while Tyler and Kelsey ran 43:52 and 43:53 respectively, accompanied by Lisa.

Lisa and Jeff have been running for most of their lives. Lisa's first experience with running was at the age of 12 when she decided to run on her middle school track team. After that she remembers running road races with her dad and discovering that she was good at it. Jeff remembers his dad taking him running as a third grader. Jeff and Lisa ran on the same middle school and high school track teams in Greenville, Michigan. The Harding kids have grown up with running also, starting in some form by the age of three. All of them completed a 5k by the age of five. The kids have had great examples to look at but have been self motivated in getting started.

Lisa is an RN and works at the health department as a Maternal Infant Health nurse doing home visits. Jeff is a teacher in the Manton Public Schools and also coaches the high school cross country and track teams. Lisa has found distance running to be a very positive part of her life, helping her to deal with stress. As she says, "If I don't run, no one wants to be around me." Jeff has had knee problems since his college years due to a traumatic injury he suffered to his ACL. He runs when his knee allows but also bikes, swims, and lifts weights to stay in shape.

Lisa currently runs 40-50 miles a week. She prefers to run alone, often sorting out issues related to her work as she runs. She says that she is always "refreshed" by running and "feels closest to God" while she is running. Jeff runs

with his high school cross country and track athletes when his knee isn't bothering him and Lisa tries to join them when her work schedule permits. Lisa has run the Grand Rapids Marathon twice. A year ago she ran 4:05 and this fall, 3:45. Jeff continues to run local 5k's and has competed in several triathlons. Lisa's future plans include running the Detroit Marathon where she hopes to qualify for Boston. Although Jeff does not race these days due to his knee, his PR for 5k is a fine time of 16:28. Lisa has run 5k in 18:30 and 10k in 38:45. She hopes that Jeff's knee improves so they can race. She ran her best half marathon, in 1:30, when she was trying to chase Jeff down. He ran 1:27 that day.

Lisa's favorite workout is a long run, sometimes 20 miles or more. She enjoys the feeling of being completely exhausted and says the long runs make her feel "invincible" and "most alive." She often follows her long run with sets of push-ups, abs, back exercises, core work, and squats/lunges. The longest run she has done to this point is 26.4 miles. Lisa's five year plan includes a 50 mile ultra marathon.

As the Harding kids grow older, Lisa and Jeff hope to continue running races with them. The entire family likes to be active and they all value experiences like running the Evert 4th of July 5k together. Lisa says the entire family is very restless and unhappy without exercise. Running for Jeff and Lisa also transfers to coaching. She says, "It's all about being positive and believing in yourself! We will never stop trying to convert others into enjoying running. It has done terrific things for us and for others."

All of the Harding family enjoyed running the Evert 4th of July 5k last year and look forward to doing it again. As Lisa said, "What a great family event!"

Ryan Marlatt

January 2014 - Runner of the Month

January's Featured Runner is Ryan Marlatt of Middletown, Rhode Island. Ryan ran the 2013 July 4th 5k in 24:56. Ryan's wife Wendy walked the 5k in 47:24 and his son, Lucas, walked it in 43:17. The Marlatt family lived in Maryland at the time of last year's July 4th 5k and has since moved to Rhode Island. Ryan, a Chief in the United States Navy, was transferred to a new assignment last October.

Ryan, 34, says he's been running consistently since participating in track all four

years of high school. When I asked why he has continued running over the years, he quoted Forrest Gump. "I just felt like running," he said.

Ryan was active in sports other than track during his high school years and decided to participate in track simply to be involved in a spring sport. He quickly discovered that he enjoyed running. After that initial exposure, Ryan came to understand running as a sport that "you can just always do without being associated with any organized venue or group." He went on to say that, as he has gotten older, he has continued running for different reasons. Things such as stress relief, fun, participating for a good cause, and physical fitness have all been reasons. Ryan added, "As an active duty Navy Chief, we have physical fitness standards to maintain."

Ryan fits 15-20 miles of running a week into his busy schedule. He prefers to run alone, while listening to music. He says he lets the tunes control his pace and distance. The longest distance Ryan has ever run was 11 miles which he did during Chief Petty Officer PT (physical training). Ryan does not keep track of things such as PR's. He says that his time in a race is usually forgotten before he pulls out of the parking lot. He runs races because he enjoys it and because most are for a good cause. Ryan does not know if he will ever get around to running a marathon even though he really enjoys running. He said, "I'm getting older and I like to drink beer. If I committed myself to training for it, I probably could, but a distance like that may not be likely. Maybe someday I could do a half marathon, maybe..."

Ryan does not have a favorite type of workout. He likes to mix things up. "For the past few months I have utilized a smaller, indoor track. It takes 18 laps to run 1.5 miles (standard Navy running test). I will usually run 10 laps and then mix in a variety of different cross fit exercises that work abs, and do some other cardio calisthenics. I typically will conduct 3-4 sets of that and then hop on an elliptical for a cool down. Other times, I'll just take off for a long run and go until I am done."

"Every race I go to," Ryan pointed out, "there's some 110 year old dude out there running circles around guys in their 20's. I want to be that guy when I am old and have nothing better to do. These guys are retired, ancient, and have nothing better to do than run. Sounds good to me! Why not!?" Although Ryan does not really race for time, he is very much aware that when he goes to a race, it is to run, not walk. He says his motto is, "I refuse to walk." And, even though some days are better than others, that is what he does.

Ryan offered some advice to other runners. "I'm certainly no expert, but I've got some miles on these tired knees and feet. Everyone runs for different reasons. Forget the trends and fads. Wear what you're comfortable in and just run."

Shoes are important, but wear what you feel good in. Same with clothes. Wear clothes you can run comfortably and efficiently in – who cares what you look like. Buying the latest running gear doesn't make you a runner. Don't do it for anyone but you. Who cares how fast you are or how far you can run. If you enjoy it and it brings you satisfaction, then just go run and have fun with it."

And remember, that's Superman talking!

Natalie Mesh

February 2014 - Runner of the Month

Our Featured Runner for February is Natalie Mesh of Corunna, Michigan. Natalie was 45 at the 2013 Evert 4th of July 5k. She ran a fine time of 23:03 and was the winner of the 45-49 age group. Isn't it nice to be at the young end of your age group?

Natalie ran in high school but just took it up again in 2012. She started running again partly to keep up with her kids. Also, one of her friends signed up to run a half marathon and Natalie got the "if she can, I can" feeling. Four months later Natalie ran her first half marathon in 2:06:57. Starting to run again resulted in a weight loss of about 12 pounds and Natalie says the 12 pounds has stayed off. Now she enjoys being able to eat anything she wants, just like when she was younger.

Last year Natalie averaged about 35 miles a week. She took a short break this year and now has resumed training. She enjoys the time alone that running provides, and says that although there are some friends she runs with every now and then, not many want to get up to run as early as she does.

Natalie's personal record for 5k is 19:33 which she set as a high school cross country runner. The 23:03 at our race is her best time since resuming her running career. In October, 2013 Natalie ran the Detroit Marathon. She had a GREAT experience, running the marathon in 4:28. Natalie says she will do another marathon but probably not in 2014. "The time involved for training is so demanding on family, body, and sleep that I think a year off will not be a bad thing." Natalie added that she will run Detroit again and that she loved going over the bridge and back through the tunnel to Canada.

Running in the very early morning, Natalie is used to the darkness. Running races in the daylight seems "odd to me," she says. The start of the Detroit Marathon was in darkness so she felt right at home. Her favorite run is from her cabin on Pogy Lake, down around Chippewa Lake. It is a "very relaxing 11.25

mile run.”

Natalie’s goals last year included running some half marathons. She has done four to date with a best time of 1:52. Natalie, her husband, and two kids ran the Bobby Crim 10 mile race in Flint and finished within four minutes of each other, 1:24 – 1:28. Last year she also wanted to run a marathon in under 4:30 and go to cross country camp with her kids and earn a “mileage maniac” shirt by running 60 miles in five days. Natalie ran 70. Mission accomplished! This year speed is the goal. She wants to lower her 5k time to less than 22 minutes and her half marathon time to 1:45.

Family is a very important aspect of Natalie’s running. Her daughter, a 16 year old high school junior runs track and cross country. She has advanced to the state meet three times and is the top distance runner on her team. Natalie’s son is a freshman, 15 years old. He also runs cross country and track. Natalie says the Corunna boys cross country team has a lot of young talent. “Watch for them to be on top at the state meet in the next couple of years!” Natalie’s husband runs on his own and helps coach the middle school team.

Natalie says they tease the kids by telling them that since both she and her husband ran in high school that they (the kids) had no choice but to be runners, that it was bred into them. The family enjoys running road races together and an older daughter has just started running. Natalie plans to do several 5k’s with her this year.

Natalie says that the “neighbors just sit and watch as we all start out on our runs, or are at the YMCA taking up treadmills, four across.” She says they’re a family of runners. “It’s who we are and what we do!”

We hope the whole family can make it to the 2014 MI-Evart July 4th 5k!

Jessica Roberts

March 2014 - Runner of the Month

My wife and I were at the Ice Cube, one of the Winter Warriors Race Series in Mount Pleasant, handing out flyers to promote the 2014 MI-Evart July 4th 5k. The temperature was around zero as 5k runners were finishing and we were about frozen. I heard my wife talking with one of the finishers, looked over, and saw Jessica Roberts of Evart in the finish chute. That’s when I decided that Jessica would be a good featured runner for the month of March.

Jessica ran the 2013 Evart 4th of July 5k in 28:51, finishing fourth in the 35-39

age group. She considers herself to be a beginner. Jessica did not run track or cross country in school but had decided to run a half marathon when she found out she was pregnant. That forced a change of plans. Jessica began running after taking care of business, often pushing a double running stroller. When the roads are clear enough Jessica averages 15-20 miles a week. She prefers to run alone, challenging herself to faster times and greater distances. Jessica's longest run so far has been six miles. Jessica's personal record for 5k is 27 minutes and for 10k it is 62 minutes. She has not yet run a marathon, but hopes to after her kids are all in school and she has more time. Her immediate goals include running a 5k in 26 minutes and doing more 10k's.

An evenly paced long run suits Jessica just fine, but her favorite workout "by far" is running intervals on the "very large hill on our dirt road." She describes it as an excellent cardio workout and a great strength builder. Jessica adds that "there is nothing more satisfying than conquering it as many times as possible."

Fitness has always been important to Jessica. Growing up on a farm, she was very active, doing a lot of physical labor. She has ridden horses all her life and in college took up weight lifting and running. After having kids, running became Jessica's passion. "It is my escape into my own world and a way to challenge myself," she says. Jessica felt inspired by talking with other runners who ran from four to six miles every day and decided that she wanted to be able to say that too.

Running has helped Jessica lose 20 pounds although she has never dieted. She has always tried to make good food choices, always being mindful that eating right produces athletic improvement.

"Running," Jessica told me, "has been a great example for my four children and husband." By the way, Jessica's husband Mike, ran his first 5k at the frigid Ice Cube in Mount Pleasant. During this past year Jessica's niece, Natasha, ran a 5k with Jessica as part of the "Girls On the Run" program. Jessica is looking forward to running more with her family in the future.

Four young children and a full time job have made it difficult for Jessica to be as structured in her running as she would like to be. Running, however, has given her a renewed sense of joy, producing stress relief and gains in physical strength. "Most of all," Jessica says, "I want to inspire my family to be healthy."

We hope to see Jessica (and Mike!) at the 2014 MI-Evart July 4th 5k. We can promise warmer weather than the Ice Cube race.

Jason Underhill
April 2014 - Runner of the Month

Jason Underhill is our featured athlete for the month of April. Jason, age 39, ran the 2013 Evert July 4th 5k in 29:01. He is from Tustin, Michigan and is the owner of Today's Fitness LLC.

Jason does not consider himself to be a true distance runner but says there is "something about getting out there and running with a group of people that is quite a feeling." He ran his first race in 2011, a 25k. Jason ran three 25k's and a half marathon before doing his first 5k. One of Jason's friends was trying to lose weight and asked Jason to run the River Bank 25k with him. Since that initial 25k, Jason has returned to run it two more times.

Jason credits running as a factor in producing a healthy lifestyle. Things such as weight loss, improved diet, and better self-image are all rewards gained from improving lifestyle. As Jason says, "A lot of diets don't last but change your thinking to improving your lifestyle and you will be unstoppable."

About a month before a race he has signed up for, Jason begins training to run. He will run three or four miles a day during this time. He prefers to run with someone for the motivation and competition it provides. The longest run Jason has done is 25k, 15.6 miles. Jason's PR for 5k was set at the Evert 5k. He does not claim to be a fast distance runner. "Anything farther than the distance between softball bases is a distance for me."

Jason has not run a marathon and says he probably won't. The only way he would consider it, he says, is if someone asked to run along for company. "I have a bad habit of not being able to tell people no when they ask me to do something like that. After all, that's why I did the three 25 k's and the Betsy Valley Half Marathon."

Jason's favorite workout is running sprints with a weight sled. He feels that this gives him a good cardio workout. Other than that, when he's not preparing for a race, Jason works out by lifting weights and doing boot camp style workouts such as flipping tires or battle ropes. When Jason enters a race his main goals are to motivate others and to finish.

Jason says his first 25 k was quite an experience, filled with good and bad feelings, highs and lows. After not really training "like I should have, it was ugly! Seven miles in I thought I was going to die! Then it happened, a crowd cheering everyone on. That adrenalin spike was quite a rush, and then it wore off, then another crowd, etc. It was a real rollercoaster ride, but I finished!"

Jason recognizes the importance of training properly for races. "Now that I own a fitness center I have no excuses and I'm getting better at taking my own advice." Today's Fitness LLC in Tustin, Michigan provides a place to train or workout as well as motivation. The center is open 24/7 with staffed hours Monday to Friday from 8:00 AM until 6:00 PM. Their motto is "Stay fit today so you can do what you want tomorrow."

Jason has already signed up for the 2014 MI-Evart July 4th 5k. We hope he can motivate a lot of people who workout at Today's Fitness LLC to do likewise. See you on the 4th, Jason!

Connie Holmes & Jessica Morgan May 2014 - Runners of the Month

Our featured runners for the month of May are Connie Holmes and Jessica Morgan. Jessica ran the 2012 July 4th 5k in 31:48 and in 2013 improved to 25:55, finishing third in the 40-44 age group. Connie ran a time of 35:52 in 2013 and was second in the 60-64 age group. Both plan to run our race this July 4th.

Connie has been running for seven years now. Prior to that, she was a walker. As Connie says, "I walked miles for years and one day while I was out walking I realized I was totally bored with it." Daughter Jessica was already a runner so Connie was aware of running as an alternative. Picking out a tree, Connie thought, "I wonder if I can run to it?" She did, then picked out another, then another, and a runner was born. Jessica and her running friends were instrumental in helping Connie get started right, providing many good running tips and always giving encouragement.

Connie's first race was a snowshoe race in Traverse City, a 5k. After that Connie says she was hooked on races. She and Jessica now do the Riverbank Run in Grand Rapids, the Cherry Festival 5k in Traverse City, and the Evart July 4th 5k each year. Connie currently runs 9-12 miles a week. The longest distance she has ever run is 6.2 miles, a 10k. Connie has done several 10k's, but prefers the 5k distance. Her personal record for 5k is 33:44 set at last year's Cherry Festival and 72:27 for 10k, set at the Riverbank Run.

Connie would like to run with someone regularly "for accountability," but usually runs alone so she can do it "when it is convenient for me." Connie does not plan to ever run a marathon. "It's just too far," she says.

Shortly after she started running, Connie started reading running articles and

became conscious of living a healthy lifestyle, partly because of Jessica's influence. Now she not only runs, but bikes, snowshoes, and does strength training and stretching as well.

Connie's favorite workout is running hills. Her mantra is "I love the hills, they make me strong!" Connie says that as she attacks the hills north of her house with her mantra going through her mind, she also sometimes thinks, "Why did I come this way again?"

Connie's goal as a runner is to keep at it as long as she can. Now, in her early 60's, she has no plans to stop. Biking and running in the spring, summer, and fall keep her fit and she also enjoys downhill skiing in the winter. Connie adds, "It's really great having Jessica as a daughter as she gives me great ideas on workouts for strength and balance. It sounds to me like Jessica is Connie's personal coach and trainer!"

Connie is registered for the Riverbank Run on May 10, then she and Jessica both look forward to the 2014 MI-Evart July 4th 5k.

Vicki Cushman

June 2014 - Walker of the Month

Our June feature, the last before the 2014 MI-Evart July 4th 5k, is walker Vicki Cushman. Vicki walked our 5k last year in 43 minutes and change, averaging 14:07 per mile. Now, that's some fast walking!

Vicki started walking for exercise about two years ago at the urging of her daughter, Kelly Hubbard. Kelly was already doing 5k's and asked Vicki to join her. Vicki agreed, but said it would only happen if they walked. So, the 2013 Evart July 4th 5k was Vicki's first one.

The cold winter kept Vicki on the sidelines until May this year but she began walking then, preparing for the 2014 MI-Evart July 4th 5k. She says, "I should walk more but my work generally takes a lot of time and I have to fit my exercise plan around that." The weather and busy schedules are things that all of us who try to exercise routinely have to deal with.

Vicki enjoys walking in the country. Sometimes it is alone and sometimes it is with her daughter. Vicki has no plans to take up running but has participated in a number of 5k's as a walker. To date she has done the Midland Arc 5k, the Kettunen Center 5k, the Edmore Potato Festival 5k, the Marion Days 5k, and our 5k here in Evart. Besides these events, on Labor Day last summer, Vicki walked

the Mackinac Bridge. At approximately five miles, walking the Bridge is Vicki's longest walk so far.

Vicki and her husband Brian, raise miniature horses on their farm. She says the farm work provides plenty of exercise, which when added to the walking she does, makes up a good exercise program. Vicki's husband told her that if she wanted to walk 5k's he would be glad to volunteer to help at the events. She has already signed up to walk and her husband has volunteered to help at the 2014 MI-Evart July 4th 5k.

Vicki is grateful that daughter Kelly got her started and plans to continue participating in 5k events. She is glad that we have a slightly different route for the 5k this year, starting and finishing at Evart High School. She says that not crossing US 10 will be a "benefit for everyone."

We are glad that our 5k gives walkers like Vicki an opportunity to participate. We hope to have many walkers besides Vicki at the 2014 MI-Evart July 4th 5k.