

RUNNING SHORTS

Trail running offers more than good health

By Niki Swearingen

As noted in this month's earlier column I absolutely love to run. Running brings a variety of benefits to my life including health, friendship, confidence and most significantly a higher sense of spirituality. In these first several entries I will address these particular aspects of running and hopefully spur a few of you to enjoy life more fully by lacing up the tennis shoes and going for a run.

In each of us is a spirit that longs for something greater than this world has to offer. We too often get caught up in our overscheduled lives with appointments, meetings, dead lines, soccer practices, dance lessons, house chores...and the list goes on. We find ourselves exhausted and tangled in our own mess of busyness. We need time to reflect, self meditate and simply be free.

I argue that running, in particular trail running, has the ability to aid us in those very things. There is something primitive...raw...humbling about running in the majesty and beauty of the forest that God created. Running in the midst of this greatness brings a whole new dimension to spirituality. The trails offer warmth yet do not always offer definite safety. On the other hand, trails present an uneasy stillness yet are not dangerous. The woods are simply unfamiliar and not always completely understood. It is this element of the unknown that I believe brings about a complete spiritual running experience. I compare trail running to the ideas of Mark Buchanan that God is neither a safe god nor a tyrant god, but the true God is good. I believe that this very fact can to some degree be witnessed through the ability to liberate ourselves to run in the goodness of God's creation.

Many times when I am running I feel as though my heart is opened wide and that the wind that gently brushes by floods my heart with insight, wisdom, and joy...life. I find great peace in hitting the trails to have some one on one time with God, just me, Him and His creation. The tranquility of nature offers a sanctuary for prayer and meditation. I find that my true feelings towards matters surface and I am able to reflect on them in a whole new light. I am convinced that these moments are a direct result of running enabling me to separate myself from the outside world and allowing my inner being to be set free and connect with the One who created it.

I could go on and on and never give the running experience justice. I guarantee that some of you are desperately searching for something greater. I encourage you to put on some shoes and go for a run to experience it for yourself. For those of you who are already runners, I urge you to seek the spiritual nature of the sport, your outlook on running and life will be forever changed. Go run!

Race Results:

Congratulations to Karin Williams, 37, who made her marathon debut at the Texas Marathon held in Kingwood on January 1st. She recorded a 4:06:52.

Christopher Wilson took part in the Rock n' Roll Arizona Marathon posting a 3:55:56. Way to go!

This year, the following 9 Huntsville area runners completed the Houston Marathon: Jerry Flanagan, 67, (4:34:49), Madisonville; Ken Johnson, 65, (5:56:37), Huntsville; Melvin Neely, 50, (3:50:01), Huntsville; Willard Oliver, 39, (4:14:30),

Huntsville; Auburn Rose, 34, (4:21:32), Madisonville; Niki Swearingen, 20, (3:49:39), Huntsville; Toast Vinson, 34, (5:57:58), Trinity; Russ Walker, 49 (5:31:08), Trinity; Nicole Zersen, 21, (4:52:06), Huntsville. Congratulations to all!

Seventeen ran the Half Marathon, including these 11 runners from Huntsville: Elizabeth Brown, 21, (3:17:32); Ross Carrie, 41, (1:49:20); Garrett Craddock, 28, (2:24:34); Irma Dowden, 41, (3:22:28); Erin Ivison, 22, (3:13:09); Lauren Keith, 21, (2:08:03); Katy Lampson, 21, (2:19:04); Wendell Londeen, 80, (3:07:51, 1st age group); Kathy Miller, 33, (2:07:52); Larry Miller, 49, (3:01:52); Nathan Winkelmann, 24, (2:26:16). Also Mike Crout, 52, (2:00:12), Nashville, TN and Laura Zuber, 45, (2:00:11) Plano, TX (son and daughter of Robert Crout of Huntsville). Good Job!

Upcoming Events in Huntsville:

Frost Your Fanny 5K- January 27th

For information about upcoming races in the area, visit the Seven Hills Running Club web site at <http://www.7hills.us>. Click on the latest Newsletter.