

# Running proves to be a life-changer

By Gary Horowitz

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Nine years ago, Wes Markus never envisioned himself as a distance runner. Running in the Boston Marathon wasn't on his bucket list.

But things changed in 2002 at the urging of his wife, Emily, and her twin sister, Margaret Burden.

Markus, an English teacher at Jefferson High School, had let his fitness level go a bit and according to Emily "was just not the guy I married," Markus said.

An intervention was in the works. Emily and Margaret saw a newspaper article about a marathon clinic at Gallagher Fitness Resources in downtown Salem, and they informed him that he would be attending. Markus initially balked at the idea.

"I had some friends who were runners, but I was somebody who was not terribly drawn to it," Markus said. "I found it to be too painful of an activity."

But Emily and Margaret were persistent — "they showed up at school and physically dragged me to the car and drove me downtown" — and although Markus didn't know it then, his life was about to change.

"I met John and Susan (Gallagher) and I met a wonderful group of people, and my life changed," said Markus, who turned 56 on Sunday and will participate in today's 115th edition of the Boston Marathon.

Gradually, Markus incorporated running into his life and looked forward to Saturday group runs that began in front of Gallagher Fitness Resources, rain or shine.

Ten runners who train regularly with the Gallagher's group will be in this year's Boston



Cancer survivor Wes Markus, an English teacher at Jefferson High School who turned 56 on Sunday, will run in his first Boston Marathon today. Thomas Patterson / Statesman Journal

## Boston Marathon

What: The 115th running of the 26.2-mile race that begins in Hopkinton, Mass., and ends in Boston.

When: 7 a.m. today (Pacific time).

Link: For live coverage, go to [UniversalSports.com](http://UniversalSports.com)

Results: [baa.org](http://baa.org)

## Local participants

### Salem

Matthew Azevedo, Debbie Baker, Bob Boyle, Tracy Broyles, Howard Cohen, Phil Crock, Chris Erion, John Gallagher, Scott Hadden, Charlotte Hartwig, Debbie Hoffmeister, Alison Hopkins, Kevin Hutchins, Keely Linn, Wes Markus, Gloria Marlowe, Dennis Miller, Donn Miller, Daniel Rideout, Michelle Roos, Karen Rumrill, Jessica Slaughter, John Strother.

### Others

Deb Lush (Keizer), Donald Reed (Keizer), Braden Wolf (Keizer), Jim Sears (Silverton).

Marathon.

"He told me the story about how he was dragged in here by his wife and sister-in-law and at first he was not sure about any of it," said John Gallagher, 48, who will run his third Boston Marathon. "But more than anything, he found out how social running is."

The Gallagher running program, which incorporates diet and training, had more benefits for Markus than just fitness.

"I began to realize it was really helping me with my job and my attitude at work," said Markus, who is in his 19th year of teaching at Jefferson High in southern Marion County. "My work become more enjoyable. I enjoyed my students more."

It took Markus six months to work up to his first half marathon, and six months later he ran a full 26.2-mile marathon. From there it was a two-marathon-a-year pace but without times good enough to qualify for Boston.

Thoughts of Boston were put on hold in December 2005 when Markus went in for a routine physical and was diagnosed with prostate cancer. After surgery in May 2006, Markus was told that he could run in four weeks, cycle in six weeks and swim in eight weeks, "so that's what I did."

"At that point, I decided I was gonna run as much as I could because I wasn't sure of the outcome, really," Markus said.

The cancer returned in November 2008, and Markus' prostate specific antigen (PSA) markers continued to rise despite radiation treatment. In January 2009, Markus was informed that there wasn't much more that could be done.

"I just decided, 'You know, I'm not gonna sit here and die. I've got to do something,'" Markus said. "I started to run as if the devil himself was chasing me."

Two months later, Markus received unexpected news. The PSA numbers were down dramatically. Another six weeks passed and the numbers had gone down so far that they were considered statistically insignificant.

Running apparently strengthened Markus' immune system, and he currently is cancer-free.

"I'm in a very small group in terms of these kind of patients," Markus said. "I'm in a group where my doctors believe my immune system is suppressing my cancer and that my workouts and training have something to do with it."

With a clean bill of health, Markus began seeing improvement in his times. He qualified for Boston in December 2009 at the California International Marathon in Sacramento.

There is no doubt that Markus' first Boston Marathon will be memorable.

"I've never run this course, and to be honest with you, I just want to see the sights and I really don't care what (time) I run," he said.

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Keizer's Deb Lush will run her third Boston Marathon in a row. She has no plans to continue that streak in the world's oldest annually contested marathon.

About 25,000 entrants representing 90 countries are expected to participate, and another half-million people will line the streets of the course that starts in rural Hopkinton, Mass., and makes its way northeast to Boston.

"In my experiences, there's not a race quite like it," said Lush, 34. "It's a thrill to be going back."

Chris Erion and Kevin Hutchins will participate in their second Boston Marathon after a long hiatus.

Erion ran the 100th Boston Marathon in 1996 while attending the College of Veterinary Medicine at Iowa State University. Now 52, Erion has a greater appreciation for the prestigious event.

"It's the original marathon in the United States. I wanted to do it again," said Erion, who lives in Salem. "I just want to take in the atmosphere."

So does Hutchins, who ran his Boston Marathon in 1994 at age 25.

"I'm very psyched," said Hutchins, 42, of Salem. "My goal is to beat my time when I was 25 (2 hours, 42 minutes)."

Donn Miller will run his 12th marathon overall, but this is his first time in Boston other than a layover at the airport in the 1960s. Miller and his wife, Peggy, arrived in Boston a few days ago and took a tour of Fenway Park.

There also has been time for Miller to visit an old high school friend he had not seen in four decades, and there were plans for a tour of Harvard University.

"First of all, the big umbrella is to have a good experience," said Miller, 60, of Salem. "It would be great if I finished ahead of 5,000 runners, which would put about 20,000 ahead of me."

Few other than the elite international runners go to Boston with designs of winning the race or setting a personal record. It's more about being part of the festivities.

"You get off the plane in the airport and there's signs everywhere: Welcome Boston Marathoners," Gallagher said. "The whole city understands what's going on."

ghorowitz@StatesmanJournal.com, (503) 399-6726 or follow at twitter.com/ghorowitz