



**September 21, 2011**

**Are you in it for the long run?**

*We are looking for active Philadelphia Marathon charter members of 17 years.*

In the world of running, 18 years is a lifetime. So, with that in mind, are you a Philadelphia Marathon "lifer?" By that, we mean someone who has participated from the very beginning -- in all 17 Philadelphia Marathons -- with plans to compete for the 18<sup>th</sup> time in 2011. For those in this star class of staying power, we have created The *Philadelphia Marathon Legacy Runners* -- our unofficial group of Philadelphia Marathoners who have gone the distance with us.

***Do you have a (verifiable) 17-going-on-18-year consecutive streak with our 26.2-mile marathon? If so, you indeed are in special company, and as a Philadelphia Marathon warrior, we want to hear from you or from folks who can identify someone who fits this status. If you are a career Philadelphia Marathoner, send an e-mail with contact information to: [randy.giancaterino@phila.gov](mailto:randy.giancaterino@phila.gov).***

As an active Philadelphia Marathoner for 17 years, besides having bragging rights, our PR team will let the world know about you and your enduring connection to our race.

For example, **Bob Koen**, who was born in Philly and now lives in Cherry Hill, NJ, has been with us from our inception in 1994. You know -- when Bill Clinton was president, grunge was all the rage, *90210* was the smash TV show, and, of course, it was W.B.B.R.S. – Way Before Barefoot Running Shoes.

Bob's road to our race was simple. He was working out and found himself getting out of breath quickly. A friend suggested running, and the rest is history. And Bob certainly has a history with us. Through perseverance, the retired entrepreneur has made it to the starting line more than most. He says his first year was a nervous blur, but he was hooked from the start. Bob explains that he continues to participate for the health of it, but his competitive side indicates that he can hold his own. His Philly Marathon career best time is 3:41 achieved in 1995.

At 65, as he reaches new terrain in the 65-to-69 age bracket, he jokes that he is actually now entering the "Social Security running club." But with age comes experience. He has 45 marathons under his belt and boasts a career-high 3:37:30 in Chicago in 1999. He also has participated regularly in the Broad Street Run and Philadelphia Distance Run locally. But he says he was born to run in the Philadelphia Marathon: "I love the course, the history... running past the Philadelphia Art Museum. It's my hometown."

And for the record, the longtime Philly finisher officially has raced past the Art Museum 17 times in competition, and has the race medals -- and jerseys -- to prove it; all 17 of them. Bob shows them off proudly like a badge of honor.

**Mark Sullivan**, of Freeburg, PA can match Bob every step as a charter Philly Marathon member. Mark's loyalty to our marathon only has been threatened once, shortly after his biggest fan, his mother Jane, died. But he used the loss to inspire him during a difficult time. For Mark, the Philly race this November will mark his 150<sup>th</sup> marathon overall. Even though the 49-year-old has run all North America, there is no place he'd rather reach his milestone than in Philadelphia.

“Philly is always the place I want to run,” he says. “I have an emotional tie there. I went to school and have friends there. It just feels like home.”

Mark, a graphic designer and illustrator who went to art school in Philadelphia is a part-time professional long-distance coach. When it comes to our marathon, Mark is an expert on endurance and distance. Remarkably, he has competed in 25 straight Boston Marathons. But his passion is the Philly race. He recalls the Philadelphia Marathon starting out with just a competitive field of 1,500, and witnessing gradual progress in both the marathon and the development of the city over the years. He says the race is now unmistakably a big-city race but has kept its distinct small-town flavor. His fastest Philadelphia Marathon finish was 2:45:34 in 1997.

Mark, who met Bob Koen formally at a Philadelphia Marathon pre-race reception in 2008, says he realized that his 17-year standing is a rare feat. He adds that he never intended to get on a roll in Philadelphia. It just evolved unexpectedly.

“I tell people everywhere I go how remarkable the Philadelphia Marathon is,” Mark says. “The race has made steady and reasonable growth over the years. That’s why I love it.”