

Morgan Wasikonis

Run/Walk Satellite Coach

I started running when I was 12 years old because my brother had started running and he had run races, and he had come home with awards. I wanted to win awards, and that was why I started running. I didn't do it because I thought it was healthy for me, or it felt good, or because it was a lifelong activity; it was just because I wanted prizes.

Years passed and the novelty of getting prizes wore off, and I found it hard to find motivation to run once I got to college. I quit for about 11 years, but when my second child was about a year old, I started running again. This time, I wanted to get in shape and lose weight. It was stress relief, and it was health oriented, but I got burned out. I ran three marathons in a one year period of time. I was living, breathing, constantly thinking about, running. I was writing about it for a local newspaper, and my social life revolved around running.

Then I was pregnant with my third child, and found it very hard to find that motivation to work running into my schedule. I couldn't afford to have it consume me again. But when my baby was 3 years old, I started up again. At first it was to lose weight, and get into shape, but then it became more about reaping all the benefits. I wanted to feel good, be in it for the long haul, use it to stay healthy both mentally and physically, and all while keeping the desire to do it alive. I started running in a group, and four years later I am still going strong, and found a way to balance it into my life.

Why this long story? Well, somewhere along the way, in the fall of 2005 I was asked to coach people who wanted to run or walk marathons or half marathons for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. I have now found that working with Team in Training has brought yet another element to my running that I did not expect. It has actually given running a higher purpose than just my own benefit. People who run or walk for TNT do it for others. They get a lot out of it, that is for sure, and the people I have coached over the last few years have all said the experience was even more rewarding than what they imagined. They are amazed at their accomplishments both in going the distance and in the fundraising. Many of them are new to running and walking and have never run a race or considered themselves an athlete. They find abilities within themselves they never knew they had.

By completing the program, however, they give a gift to others that is immeasurable. I have heard countless stories, and speeches by people who have benefited directly and immensely by the research the program has helped to fund. There is just no concrete way to put a value on the support generated by TNT. It means something different to each participant and each person who has been touched by a blood cancer in their life. For me, I would say that TNT is best summed up by one of our participants, a rarity who had been running for 20 years but had never done a marathon. He said, "I have been running almost every day for 20 years, but never saw the point in running a marathon. But then I got a TNT brochure in the mail, and I saw a point."

