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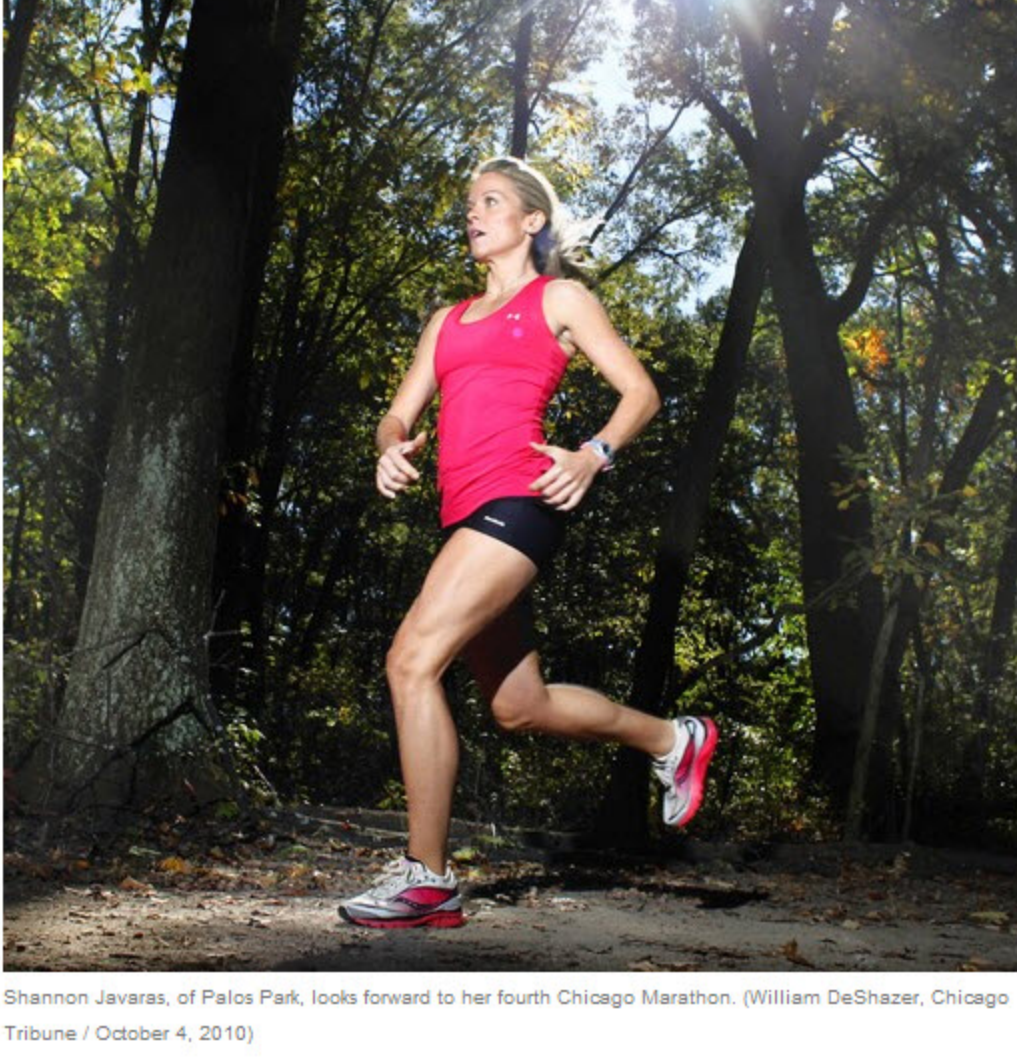
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# Chicago Marathon doesn't run out of stories

**Some run for charity or a specific goal; some run to show if they can; some to encourage others**



Shannon Javaras, of Palos Park, looks forward to her fourth Chicago Marathon. (William DeShazer, Chicago Tribune / October 4, 2010)

Story by Pat Dunningan Special to the Tribune Photos by William DeShazer Chicago Tribune  
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★★★★★  
**Brooke Jackson, 41**

When dermatologist Brooke Jackson moved to Chicago's South Loop in 1999, she looked for a group to help her keep up the marathon training she had started during her medical fellowship in Houston.

Everyone she asked told her she was in the wrong place. "The running community is on the North Side," she was told.

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Jackson set out to prove that idea wrong. She contacted a national training organization and asked about organizing a Chicago chapter. She sent e-mail messages, advertised in running magazines and left information at running stores. She recruited coaches, runners and people who wanted to be runners. It turned out there were a lot of people interested in running on the South Side. Within four years, she said, as many as 450 runners were participating in a group that met at the South Side YMCA, near 63rd Street and Stony Island Avenue, for Saturday-morning runs along the lakefront.

Later, she said, "I literally stood at the finish line and cried" when members of the group who couldn't run a mile when they began completed the 2000 Chicago Marathon.

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"Don't ever tell Brooke Jackson no," she said.

Jackson took great satisfaction in the fact that most of the runners in the group were African-American — a population with more than its share of ailments like diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity.

She no longer runs the group, but she still runs. This year's marathon will be her ninth. Her goal, in addition to raising money for the Skin Cancer Foundation in New York, is "not to come across the finish line on a stretcher" and preferably, to cross it in less than six hours. Her cheering section includes her husband, twin girls, 3, and son, 14 months.

**Rudy Christian, 40**

Rudy Christian joined the Army National Guard at 18, and it was his luck to be assigned to a commander who had gone to college on a track scholarship.

"He would harass any runners he could beat," Christian recalled. "I set my mind to it that I would beat this guy."

Eventually, he did. Later, as a commander himself, Christian offered his soldiers a day off from drills if they could beat him. Someone eventually did, but by then, Christian didn't need challengers to keep him running.

"I enjoyed it," he said. "The running bug caught me."

When he hits his stride in Sunday's marathon, it will be at least his 38th marathon, he said. Christian, who lives in south suburban Matteson, has logged five Ironman triathlons, including Ironman Canada in August, which he finished in a little more than 15:45.

Christian said running helps him burn off excess energy. As a public health liaison to a Japanese pharmaceutical company, he said he travels 50,000 miles a year, running wherever his job takes him.

In 2001, he turned his passion into a business, forming MaxFitness, which offers triathlon and marathon training. Today, he manages runners and walkers who meet in Hyde Park for Saturday runs. Christian expected 23 of them to join him Sunday.

He tells his runners to dedicate every race to someone else: "Make it about something other than yourself." When things get hard, Christian says he will think of his 3-year-old son, Bryce. "His energy is like a 13 on a scale of 1 to 10," Christian said.

**Shannon Javaras, 35**

Shannon Javaras' first experience running a marathon felt so awful that she wondered why anyone would do it.

Then she collapsed, one of hundreds of 2007 Chicago Marathon runners overcome by record heat that led officials to make the unprecedented decision to stop the race. She woke up on her back with another runner's hand in her mouth, trying to prevent her from choking on her tongue.

Javaras, who passed out at the 21-mile mark in Pilsen, spent that night in a hospital, sick and devastated. Even though she had started running six months earlier, she had set a goal of qualifying for the Boston Marathon. "It was a huge let-down," said Javaras, of south suburban Palos Park.

Her husband refused to let her wallow. He signed her up to run an Arizona marathon three months later. That was all it took. She qualified for Boston, running in 2008 and 2009. She returned to the Chicago Marathon in 2008 and 2009 as well, putting the 21-mile mark behind her at an increasingly competitive pace. "It made it that much sweeter each year," she said.

Now, she says, she understands why people do it. "So many things seem so much clearer or later cut more important. I'm a better person because I run."

This year will be her eighth marathon. Her goal is finish in around three hours. She will also be running for her father-in-law, who died of cancer in April.

Cheering her on will be her husband, Alex Javaras, riding his bike along the route; her mother; three sisters; and her 10-year-old daughter, Gracie.

**James Lilly, 40**

With 20 years of wheelchair racing behind him and a stack of medals to his name, James Lilly wasn't sure he would be back at the Chicago Marathon this year.

Racing had turned his life around after an adolescence gone so wrong he ended up paralyzed in a gang shooting at 15. He had channeled his anger, frustration and athletic drive into a career as an elite athlete. Lilly has competed in some of the sport's most grueling events, including a 367-mile race — later cut to 267 miles — from Fairbanks to Anchorage, Alaska. He completed that race nine times, winning in 2002.

An emotional setback earlier this year kept Lilly out of his racing chair for months. He was depressed and he wanted to spend more time with his three children, ages 14, 10 and 2.

"It was going to be an off year for me," he said.

Then race officials contacted him about a campaign to feature 10 inspirational Chicago-area athletes.

Lilly, a sales representative for an Atlanta-based sport chair company, has spent years telling his story to students in the Chicago area. Part of his message is about using sports as a way to burn off negative emotions.

"If you put yourself out there and get involved in physical activity, you're not going to take it out on the wrong person," said Lilly, who lives in west suburban Chicago.

Then he took his own advice and started training again. On Oct. 2, Lilly finished the Twin Cities Marathon in a little more than two hours.

"It felt good," he said. "Wheelchair racing has always been a therapeutic thing for me. It's really helped me rise above the pain and frustration."

Lilly said his wife, Nora Cahue, "is more supportive than ever. She knows it has helped me stay focused and it has really kept me healthy."

Now preparing for his 18th Chicago Marathon — or 19th; he's lost count — Lilly is raising money for the National Spinal Cord Injury Association. He says he does not have a time goal: "I just want to get out there and go."

**Jennifer Harrison, 39**

When Jennifer Harrison steps into the corral to await the start of the Chicago Marathon, she will be there as an accomplished runner and triathlete with a goal of breaking 3:10.

"Everybody knows when the gun goes off, I'm there as an athlete," said the lifelong athlete and West Dundee resident who won the first triathlon event she entered.

But Harrison is also coach to seven other runners who will be competing that day. She knows there's nothing else she can do.

"My job is to get them ready, get them to the starting line with no injuries," she said. After that, they're on their own.

Harrison, who ran, swam and played basketball while growing up in Schaumburg, turned her love of sports into a business plan, an idea she incubated during a rare stretch of inactivity: on bed rest while pregnant with her twins, now 8. Now she coaches full time, using training software, Internet telephone service, and e-mail to design nutrition, exercise and motivational plans for runners and triathletes at all levels. It is largely an online business, which allows her to coach runners as far away as England, she said.

Her appreciation for technology, however, has its limits. She doesn't really like treadmills and sees her job as helping to develop outdoor lifestyles, not just muscles.

"At the end of the day, it's about fitness and being outside," she said.

**Daniel Malinski, 34**

Daniel Malinski, knew he was on a risky path. He was overweight, with a family history of heart disease and couldn't carry groceries up a flight of stairs without losing his breath. He worried about not being able to keep up with his daughters, ages 5 and 18 months.

He cut out his fast-food habit and started to run. He talked about entering the 2009 Chicago Marathon but didn't follow through. Then Malinski, who lives in Chicago's Jefferson Park neighborhood, read an entry on an endurance sports blog celebrating the achievements of the back-of-the-pack runners who run for charity.

Malinski found himself filled with regret and thinking about 2010. He wrote to the blog's author and asked for help.

Help came running. A running store offered him free shoes. A running coach offered free training. ChicagoNow (owned by Tribune Media Group) offered him the opportunity to blog about his experience. The American Heart Association offered a cause that was a perfect fit for a man whose oldest daughter was born with a heart defect. Scores of area runners offered advice, encouragement and words to run by.

Malinski had no more excuses. If he bailed, he would have to explain to more than just a few friends and family members.

"Sharing my experiences on the blog keeps me more accountable," said Malinski, a national advertising and marketing coordinator who blogs as Cubicle Dad. "I started hearing from friends, family and even strangers. I didn't want to let them down."

He hasn't. Today, about 110 pounds lighter, Malinski is preparing to cross the finish line. He said he will be satisfied with any finish time within the 6 1/2 hours the course is open.

"This race is a celebration of the year, losing the weight and making the lifestyle change," he said.

More than 36,000 people are expected to run, walk or roll through 26.2 miles of city neighborhoods Sunday in the Bank of America Chicago Marathon. As usual, runners range from professional athletes to first-timers just hoping to go the distance, with a record number running for charity.

Carey Pinkowski, executive race director, said 10,100 people have signed on to teams representing 150 charities, in an effort that is expected to raise more than \$10 million. That is up from 8,000 charity runners in 2009, Pinkowski said.

This year's marathon falls on 10-10-10, providing calendar symmetry. The race is noteworthy for the field of elite athletes competing, including men's defending champion Sammy Wanjiru, of Kenya, who set a course record in 2009 of 2:05:41.

Thousands of other runners, including those profiled below, will be pursuing their own goals, whether for charity, for self-improvement or just to prove to themselves that they can endure a marathon. Some will run in hope of convincing others that they can too. As Brooke Jackson, a South Loop dermatologist, put it, "If I can do this, anybody can do it."

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