

Back to the Basics

Less was best in 2014.

BY CARA McLAURIN ESAU

It's funny how cell phones used to be big and bulky. Through the years, they got smaller, sleeker, and smaller still. The ones that were the coolest were so tiny that we could barely keep track of them. Then, all of a sudden, bigger was better. The phones got bigger and bigger—so much so that now my kids no longer laugh at the size of my original cell phone, which, yes, I still have. I guess the same could be said of fashion, too. For instance, bell bottoms were hip. Then, in the '80s, we really couldn't believe we wore those things. In fact, in that decade our jeans were so snug that we had to do bodily contortions just to put them on. Of course, the bell bottoms made a reappearance, and to date, I have no idea whether they are still “in.”

Just as phones and clothing styles seem to revisit earlier eras, many races have opted for finisher medals that hearken back to the past—and they have won the hearts of many runners in doing so! In 2014, some beautiful medals that were extremely popular among our panel were made from such materials as wood, clay, and glass. Also, the classic medallion styles with skylines and landmarks won favor, getting away from odd shapes, designs, and flashing lights. The finisher medals were, for the most part, truly *medals*; the gadgets and gimmicks gave way to old-fashioned, traditional pieces.

Back to the horse and buggy

You can't get more traditional than the Adams County Marathon, which runs its course through Amish country in West Union, Ohio. Before its inaugural race in 2012, race director Louvina Duncan was always on the lookout for new, beautiful places to run. One day her husband, a UPS driver, came home from work and told her that he had found the perfect running territory for her. When they drove the course, they were swept away by its beauty and concurred that it would be ideal for a marathon. Amazingly, when Duncan approached the Amish elders and proposed the idea of starting a marathon there, the elders agreed—after a while, that is: “At first they looked at me like I was from outer space. So I left them a running magazine, which they must have read cover to cover. When I went back in a week, they were

giving me all sorts of suggestions, and they offered to help out at water stops and at the finish line. We decided the proceeds would go to their Amish school fund.”

Initially, Duncan did not know if there would be any interest, but she thought it was worth a shot. When just two runners signed up, she and her husband agreed: they had a race! Duncan’s very next thought was that she wanted an amazing finisher medal. According to Duncan, who describes herself as a slow runner, “It’s all about the finisher award.” She sought out several Amish families to find an award that would represent the character of the race effectively. At first she considered giving some kind of broom to the finishers, but her husband came up with a brainstorm: baskets. He knew of an Amish family on his route that made baskets. As soon as Duncan saw a sample of what the basket-making family was able to do, she knew she had found the perfect finisher medal. The proof was at the marathon expos: “We found that when we show the baskets . . . they are definitely what sells this race.” Indeed, our panelists were sold on Adams County Marathon’s finisher medals by voting it the number three medal in the country.

The race begins at Miller’s Bakery and Furniture and winds through the rolling hills of the pristine Amish community and farmland. Along the route, Amish children hand out water in front of their four schools that are part of the course. The families even bake the finish line desserts, and they provide a dinner for the runners the night before the race at the school auction. “The Amish look forward to meeting and talking with the runners,” says Duncan, “and they tell me that the runners are so polite and respectful. They can’t wait to host the race again in 2015.” Because the race has no time limit, it attracts seasoned and novice runners in addition to walkers.

Back to the roots

Our 2014 panel consistently praised the medals made from nature. Both the Wabash Trace Nature Trail Marathon and the Harpeth Hills Flying Monkey Marathon were winners with their distinctive wood-carved finisher medals. These works of art truly reflect the natural beauty of the races they represent.

The Wabash Trace Nature Trail Marathon is a smaller race—last year race officials reported that 78 runners participated in the marathon. However, the weekend also includes a half-marathon and a relay, with a total of 370 runners ranging in age from 12 to 76. The race features signs marking the miles along with historical information (which the more competitive among us never get to read) about the towns, the trail, and famous runners from the area, as well as racing tips and inspirational messages.

A converted railroad right of way, the Wabash Trace Nature Trail runs for 63 miles along beautiful, scenic Iowa countryside. The trail was completed in 1997 and requires countless volunteers and, of course, funds to preserve all those miles

of trails for public use and enjoyment. Proceeds from the marathon benefit the nature preservation of the trail.

Our panel raved about the medal because of how well it represents the character of the race.

Surely no race beats Wabash in terms of the medal representing the race effectively. According to race director Shelly Smith, “We wanted runners to have a piece of the trail. . . . It is made from a real log from the Wabash Trace Trail and engraved with the race logo.” Panelist Taryn Lynn Giumento stated, “I love the local wood used here, and I love the design of the logo in the shape of a foot.” Another panelist, Tony Nguyen, agreed, “It’s nice to see a nature-inspired medal awarded to the runner. The footprint made up of leaves and flower petals on wood is simply genius.” Indeed, the natural wood is perfect for a nature-trail marathon, and the simple, clever engraving puts this medal over the top.

Each year Wabash offers a different organization or town along the route the opportunity to be involved in the planning of the race. The featured town gets to determine the medal theme. In 2012, the race’s inaugural year, the old railroad town of Malvern was featured. Thus the first medal was shaped like a train. In 2013 the medal was shaped like a shamrock because that year Imogene, an Irish town, was highlighted. In 2014 it was Shenandoah’s turn to be featured. Shenandoah is famous for many things but decided to focus on what is at the heart of the race: nature. Organizers used a slice from a real log as the medal and engraved the logo that had been created in 2012. Local graphic artist Tara Menke came up with the leaf-foot design, and an area engraving business did the drying and engraving. Another local business donated the twine used in place of a ribbon. Smith says, “Each medallion is different, just like each tree is unique.”

Back to nature

The trees of Harpeth Hills are hiding places for a legendary breed of flying monkeys—the namesake of the Harpeth Hills Flying Monkey Marathon, which runs through challenging hills in Percy Warner Park of Nashville, Tennessee. Throughout the 26.2 miles, there is an elevation change of 7,200 feet overall with some grades of 10 to 12 percent. The course has two loops, including two shots at a famously beautiful but infamously difficult stretch called “The 11.2,” which winds along woodlands, ridges, hiking trails, roads, fields, and grassy horse trails overlooking downtown Nashville and nearby hills. Describing the course as “uniquely challenging” and even “beastly,” the event’s website cautions athletes that this may not be the best choice for a first marathon. With a warning like that, its finishers certainly deserve a worthy medal at the finish line.

The Flying Monkey Marathon medal is up to the task of satisfying its finishers. Here we have another medal made of natural wood with the mascot—the

Views from a Medal Chaser

All of these top medals are really special. Each and every one is very emotional. I've always loved the creativity and artistry that go into marathon medal design. This year alone, I've run 1,000 miles. Many of them have passed with my mind visualizing the medal of my upcoming marathon. I take the image into my heart. I hold it close and depend on it to carry me through dark moments of training. Just after I cross the finish line, a smile always rises from my soul. The next steps to the volunteer or race organizer who presents the medal are pure bliss: a handshake, a kiss on the cheek, or a simple, congratulations/thank-you exchange. Nirvana. I shamelessly wear the medal throughout the day. On a plane, in a restaurant, just walking down the street, my medal demands attention and commands the kind of respect purchased by greed, determination, and a quest for achievement. People of every description lean in and hold the prize; they feel the weight, they study the colors, they contemplate the sacrifice, and always they nod their heads in wonder. It is so much fun to study their reactions to the design. Medals are the living identity of event organizers and countless participants past, present, and future.

Finisher medals are a love letter from the location of the run and its unique place in the world. Each trophy is a raised fist, trumpeting the power of the idea behind the race, celebrating a city, honoring the past, sharing culture, championing a cause. Many factors contribute to my decision to run a marathon. At first, I ran at home, four Los Angeles Marathons. I branched out to San Francisco primarily to win the 2-in-1-Year Challenge Medal. I went on to legendary Chicago and beyond. The location of the events matters a lot. The time of the year weighs heavily as it relates to training and readiness. Now I have an epic 50-state, seven-continent goal. Place, time, and relevance to my mission all play a part. But—and this can't be overstated—the beauty and meaning of a finisher medal can be a powerful allure. In an instant, airline tickets will be purchased, hotel room booked, calendar adjusted, and the narrative of my life written to include my burning desire to capture that gorgeous prize.

A word on display: I have a quarter-inch thick, 4-foot-tall softwood branch that stands on its end, leaning against a bookcase in my home. There is a split in the end. Not unceremoniously, when I return from a race, I approach the streamers and hang my newest treasure with the rest—immortal for the moment, gifts to pass to my girls when I'm gone. This is the nature of the runner's medal.

My biggest regret as a year-end judge is that, save the Marine Corps 2014 and Rock 'n' Roll Vegas 2014 medals, I will never have the opportunity to earn any of these gems from 2014. My process for selecting favorites begins with a first-blush, initial, emotional reaction to the medal. I take a moment and let the colors, the shapes, and the distinctiveness hit me. Then I muse on my personal relationship to the race: have I run it? Might I ever run it? Why? When it's funny, I smile. Some truly seem to capture the essence of their territory; I love those. The icons and the topographical flourishes mean a lot. Finally, I evaluate the pure design, noting size, weight, distinctive shapes and contours, fonts, and overall complexity.

—Sean Astin, runner

mysterious and dangerous flying monkey—engraved in it. Race director Trent Rosenbloom states, “The local running community came together with the idea of creating a back-to-basics and hard-as-nails marathon. . . . I design every year’s medal to reflect the theme. We always do them in fresh-cut, laser-imprinted wood with hand-tied leather straps.” Our panel loved its simplicity and its departure from the glitter of metal bling. Medals photographer Rob Rayder agrees, “The Flying Monkey Marathon is a phenomenon in the South. Its lore has spread by word of mouth. The medal is low-tech and quirky. This was another obvious choice for those who get tired of the sparkle and shine.”

In addition to wooden medals, another natural material that wowed our panel was clay, as in the Big Sur Marathon medal. This is certainly not the first year that Big Sur has impressed us; it has been in the top 25 five times out of six years. Panelist Rich Zappen says, “It looks like stone taken from the very ground they run on. The custom chiseled typeface in the soft blue color really complements the stone-looking background.”

Considered by many runners to be the most scenic marathon in the country, Big Sur is a point-to-point course of moderate difficulty. Of course, its runners do not notice the difficulty because they are swept away by the unbelievable beauty. Its rolling hills, vast redwoods, and breathtaking Pacific Ocean views are all aspects of the “largest rural marathon in the world.” Big Sur’s natural, simple clay finisher medal is a fitting tribute to such a naturally beautiful race.

And speaking of nature, the Austin Marathon was named one of the “greenest” races in North America, certified by the Council for Responsible Sport. Its finisher medal was possibly the first to feature a translucent glass inlay. In fact, several medals went the direction of glass in 2014. Kansas City, Newport, Austin, Running for the Bay, 26.2 with Donna, Wisconsin, Mississippi River, Clearwater, Illinois, Half Moon Bay, Wineglass, and Glass City all featured glass in their

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medals. However, only three of these made it to our top 25: Austin, Newport, and Wineglass. Austin used a touch of inlaid glass on its medal to suggest shimmering waters flowing under the bridge.

Newport made it to the top 10 again, the fifth consecutive time it has been on our list. It uses local glass and creates a lovely sun catcher that is consistently a favorite. Wineglass Marathon, which takes place in New York's beautiful Finger Lakes Wine Country, was voted #14. Races commonly use glass to add flair to their finisher medals, but there is a variety of techniques in adding glass. Many medals use a partial-thickness glass inside inlays to add sparkle. Some glass inlays have details behind them that shine through, such as Running for the Bay. Others use full-thickness glass inlays where light can pass straight through from front to back. Finally, the all-glass sun catchers are desirable to many runners. Glass in medals is common, but medal designers are coming up with ingenious ways of adding it to augment the bling.

Back to the beach

Amazingly consistent winners of the #1 and #2 positions have been the Fort Lauderdale A1A Marathon and the Surf City Marathon, respectively. Three of the six years we have held the top 25 medals contest, those two marathons have held firm their grasp at the top. Though our panel is entirely new and fresh each time, these two marathons produce medals with apparently universal appeal. Surf City, along with Flying Pig and Portland, has been on our list of winners every year that we have held the contest. The grand winner in this year's contest is once again the A1A Marathon! Its beach-themed medals that open up are invariably crowd pleasers—or panel pleasers in this case.

In this year's contest, the Flying Pig came in at number 17, with our new panel still making witty comments about the pig's rear end on the backside of the medal. Portland held the 10th place with its brilliantly shiny double-sided medal that features Portland's rose symbol and its state seal. Also returning winners to the 2014 medals are Detroit, Marine Corps, and Space Coast. Our panel always appreciates how, as panelist Christine Snow-Reaser put it, Detroit's medal "symbolizes all that Detroit has been through [over] the years." The Marine Corps medal, which has been in the top 25 in five of six years, is classic, elegant and patriotic, consistently appealing to marathon runners. Marine Corps topped our list in 2009. Space Coast changes its design every year but adheres to the space shuttle concept, which had it flying high to the number four position for the third time in the last four years.

"If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Some medals have discovered exactly what their runners love. So why change them? Kona's medals boast vivid, radiant colors each year. Mississippi Blues always features a large guitar—with a pick—that

our panelists want to play. Miami is known for its sunny spinners. As panelist Jared Ward says, “I love the gold accented by the blue shimmering water, not to mention the triple-spinner design. This medal has some flair—perfect for the Miami Marathon.” These medals have redefined classic, determining and sticking to their own version of “traditional.”

Back to the classics

New York City went back to the basics in terms of creating a very traditional-looking medal and won big, coming in at number 18—its first time in the top 25. The medal features the NYC skyline in a very classic fashion. Panelist Jared Ward says, “It is solid, looks like a hunk of metal, and sums up New York while preserving the traditional circular form.” Also on our list with skylines and landmarks were Detroit, Austin, Baltimore, Chicago, Pittsburgh, and Miami.

New to the top 25 in 2014 were Jackson Hole, Adams County, Wabash Trace, Flying Monkey, Best Damn Race, Tobacco Road, Garmin, Gnaw Bone, Woodstock, and Long Beach. As the sense of competition among race organizers is spreading, marathon medals get better and better with each passing year. Nevertheless, runners don’t all seek the glitzy and gimmicky medals. Trends and styles come and go, but a classic award that captures the essence of a marathon is a treasure that we runners chase and cherish.

The 2014 Winners

Top Multistate Series: Riverboat *Runner-up:* Heartland

Top Multiyear Series: Cowtown *Runner-up:* Space Coast

Top Canadian Medal: Calgary *Runner-up:* Rock 'n' Roll (RnR) Montreal

The Top 25

U.S. honorable mention: Air Force, Baltimore, Boston, Chase the Goose, Chicago, Pittsburgh, RnR Seattle, Running for the Bay, Running for the Bears, and Saint George

25. Woodstock. I would wear this one whenever I needed to feel peaceful or when breaking up fights between my children. It also makes a great prop for a disco costume . . . and you never know when you’ll need that.—*Erica Hoffman*



24. Gnaw Bone. Love the skull theme with the red eyes.

—*Brian Houston*



23. Garmin. The face on the cowardly lion sold me—such detail. This medal represents the marathon’s theme of *The Wizard of Oz*. Love the sparkling yellow brick road leading up to the Emerald City!—*Pamela Kent-Okazaki*



22. Long Beach. This is a classy medal. The colors are put together so well with the seashell, my wife could wear this as jewelry.

—*Jared Ward*



21. Austin. I’ve spent good time in Austin, legendary for its culture! When I saw this medal, I instantly felt like I was back in the city. The slogan “run Austin, love Austin” is perfect. The marathon and the city are relaxed and comfortable. The medal shows it.—*Sean Astin*



20. Mississippi Blues. This medal takes the shape of a symbol that represents the race: a guitar for the Mississippi Blues. Pitch perfect. I just want to grab this guitar and play a riff. Added bonus: pick is included.

—*Tony Nguyen*



19. Tobacco Road. The medal is circular and solid. The way the train pops out at you in this one is sweet. —*Jared Ward*



18. New York City. Classy. The art deco-inspired Lady Liberty in the middle will make everyone feel like a winner.—*Tony Nguyen*



17. Flying Pig. Only running a marathon “when pigs fly?” Well, here you go! An awesome flying pig-casso, front and back! —*Pamela Kent-Okazaki*



16. Big Sur. I love how this medal is simple, yet the contrast with the bright lettering is eye-catching and fun. Great artistry here; well done.—*Taryn Lynn Giumento*



15. Kona. This is by far the most improved medal. The colors scream “Hawaii,” and the inlaid glass ocean makes this medal a sparkling feast for the eyes befitting a race in paradise.—*Robert Rayder*



14. Wineglass. This is a gorgeous, authentic design.
—*Stephanie Freeman*



13. Detroit. I think they fit in everything that Detroit offers.—*Nancy Torres*



12. Best Damn Race. I love the coral and glass detail; its perfect for a city of waterways, more like a souvenir than a medal.
—*Sara Jensen*

11. Jackson Hole. I love the uniqueness of this medal. The moose horn and brand represent the natural beauty of Jackson Hole, Wyoming.
—*Pamela Kent-Okazaki*



10. Portland. This medal really would pop on a wall of other medals. The golden-badge look makes it seem like you were just promoted to general for finishing the marathon. This one will turn heads in your office.—*Jared Ward*



9. Flying Monkey. This medal is as quirky as the race itself.—*Betsy Rogers*



8. Wabash Trace. Nice to see a marathon that recycles fallen trees.
—*Matt Jasper*



7. Miami. Colorful, double-sided, triple-spinner, impressive size, and inlaid glass: this medal has it all! Miami has outdone itself and has separated from the rest. It is impossible to ignore when strung around your neck. When you hold it in your hand, you can't help but watch with amazed fascination as the medal changes its character with each twist of the spinner.
—*Robert Rayder*



6. Newport, Oregon. I love it when finisher medals make an effort to reflect the environment of the race. This medal, with local glass, stunning colors, and details, fits the bill better than any others I've seen.
—*Vikki Feggulis*



5. Marine Corps. Anything with Marines on it gets my vote. The black-nickel finish makes it look like an expensive piece of jewelry. Knowing that this marathon medal is waiting for you at the finish is all the motivation you would need. Also, the added bonus of having an enlisted Marine put it around your neck is special.—*Rich Zappen*



4. Space Coast. The colors, spaceship, and astronauts: it's dreamy! I want to fly there and run like an astronaut just to get that medal!—*Nancy Torres*



3. Adams County. This medal caught my eye immediately. Hand-crafted, lovely coloring, unique, it appears as though the makers of the award took their time and made something that will resonate forevermore with the runners of this marathon. It makes me want to run this race.—*Ed Thomas*



2. Surf City. The very sharp-looking surfboard symbolizes the surf culture in that area.—*Christine Snow-Reaser*



1. A1A Lauderdale. This is the coolest medal I've ever seen. Even compared to the rest of this list, you don't see another with the same craftsmanship, detail, and unique design behind it. This race has just been added to my bucket list!—*Vikki Feggulis*



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Medal submissions for 2015

Race directors, please e-mail close-up pictures of your marathon medals to medals@marathonandbeyond.com. If you are shutterbug challenged or want to ensure that you have great pictures for our medal panel, we can shoot the pictures for you. Simply e-mail and ask us for our mailing address.

Our 2014 panel

Carl Allegretti (Illinois) has completed more than 65 marathons and two ultra-marathons, often as part of fund-raising events that enable him to give back to the community. In 2011, he received an award as the top fund-raiser at the 2010 Bank of America Chicago Marathon.

Athlinks Street Team Manager **David Allison** (Arizona) has been running since age 6. He was a founder of the Phoenix Flyers Track Club and has run at all levels except professional. Additionally, David coaches through his company, the Marathon Coaching Consultants.

Besides being a well-known and beloved actor (*The Goonies*, *Rudy*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and more), **Sean Astin** (California) has been a long-distance runner for more than 25 years. In 2012, he founded #Run3rd, an inspirational Twitter campaign that shares dedications made on behalf of people's loved ones, causes, and ideas. His mantra: "I run first for myself, second for my family, and I #run3rd for you." Sean has completed nine marathons, including the full Goofy Challenge at Disneyland.

Lisa Bentley (Canada) represented Canada in the 1995 Pan Am Games. She has been the female winner of 11 Ironman events around the world. Lisa had the honor of being inducted into the Canadian Triathlon Hall of Fame and the Etobicoke Sports Hall of Fame. After retiring from professional triathlons, Lisa started running marathons in 2011.

Molly Buchanan (Kansas) is a vice-president for U.S. Bank and a district manager for the Kansas City in-store branches. When not working, she enjoys spending time with her husband and her dog, Roxy. An avid runner, she is always training for something. Molly has completed many races, including four marathons and two half-marathons.

A marathon runner for 20 years, **Joe Cable** (North Carolina) has finished 16 marathons from coast to coast. His most memorable races have been the 100th Boston, New York, Marine Corps, and Chicago—three weeks after 9/11. Joe met his wife while training for his first marathon.

Vikki Feggulis (New Jersey) started running in 2012 to lose weight. On a whim, she signed up for her first race—a 7.5K. The adrenaline, coupled with a first-place

finish, propelled her to pursue numerous races, including her first marathon in 2014. A recent graduate of Utica College of Syracuse University, she runs to unwind from busy days spent in Manhattan as a public relations account executive.

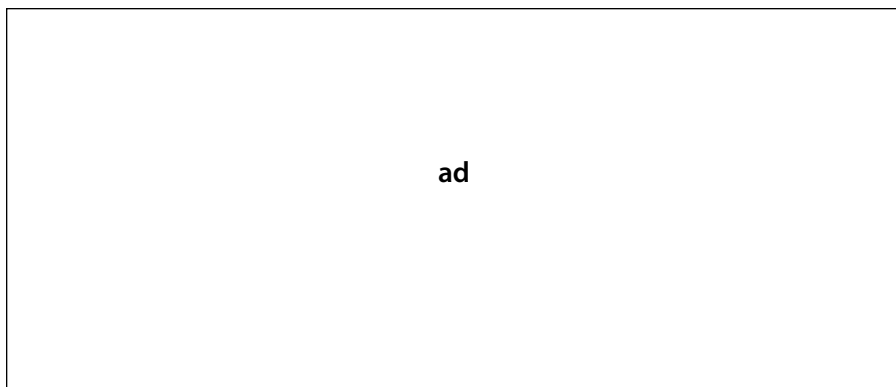
As a teenager, **Stephanie M. Freeman** (Georgia) lived two months of her life in a coma, given little chance to survive. Upon waking, she heard that she would never walk again. Today, with determination and strength, she is a proud marathon runner with six marathons under her belt, including the Boston Marathon in 2014. She spends her time running the world and speaking on the power of never giving up in life.

When **Taryn Lynn Giumento** (Pennsylvania) ran her first race, a one-miler, she was only 8 years old. Now, 20 years later, she runs distances from 5K to ultramarathons. She was the second woman at the USA 50K Road Championships. Taryn currently focuses on longer endurance races, aiming to make the USA 24-hour team.

Erica Hoffman (Maryland) is an executive coach, business owner, and mother of three young children. A novice marathoner, Erica recently completed the New York City Marathon, where she and a group of friends raised over \$30,000 for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society as part of Team In Training.

In 2009, **Brian Houston** (Oregon) ran his first marathon at the age of 45. He has since run seven marathons, qualifying for Boston twice. Brian ran the Boston Marathon in 2013, finishing minutes before the bombs went off. He recently won his age group in a 10K trail run. His next goals are to compete in triathlons and to eventually compete in an Ironman.

Matt Jasper (Iowa) started running 12 years ago with no intention to run a marathon. Currently, he has finished 20 marathons, two Ironmans, and a 50K race. Additionally, he has run a large number of shorter races. The marathon is by far his favorite distance. In his spare time, Matt helps coach a local high school girls' cross-country team.



At the age of 9, **Sara Jensen** (New Jersey) began running for her school's track team because her mother was the coach. She immediately fell in love with running; it made her feel confident and helped her both physically and mentally through the bumpy roads in life. Sara has finished 11 half- and full marathons in nine states. She plans to reach 50 states by age 50.

For **Pamela Kent-Okazaki** (Texas), running began as a way to burn extra calories but has evolved into a lifestyle. Since 2009, she has completed 63 half-marathons, 17 marathons, and one 50K. Pamela met her husband at a marathon two years ago and, with his encouragement, ran an average of one marathon a month in 2013.

Aaron Ladd (Massachusetts) is the boys' distance coach at Lexington High School in his childhood hometown. Aaron attended Saint Lawrence University in New York and then went on to be a volunteer assistant at the University of Iowa while finishing his master's degree. A 16-time marathon finisher in 16 different states, Aaron is working toward all 50.

An "over the hill" lawyer, **Larry Macon** (Texas) ran his first marathon in 1996. After discovering that completing a marathon is 90 percent mental, he has haunted the races ever since. Now 69 years old, Larry has finished more than 1,400 marathons and set five Guinness records for the most marathons in a year (currently 238). He has run a marathon in every state 17 times.

One April Fools' Day, **Tony Nguyen** (California) thought he was having a heart attack. This scare prompted him to make some changes in his life. He took his dog for a walk around the block. Eventually that short walk turned into five miles, then a run, and ultimately a marathon. Tony has now run 100 marathons, 30 ultramarathons, and five hundred-milers.

Robert Rayder (Tennessee) has served as volunteer photographer and panel member for *Marathon & Beyond's* Top 25 medals contest since its inception six years ago. As a result, he has amassed quite a sizable collection of marathon medals that continues to grow almost daily. This March he celebrated his 100th marathon or ultra distance finish.

After becoming a personal chef, **Betsy Rogers** (Washington) turned to running to combat the occupational hazard of weight gain. She ran her first marathon, the Marathon du Medoc, in 2007 and became a Marathon Maniac the following year. She has since run 88 marathons and 58 ultras and hopes to return to Medoc to run her 100th 26.2-mile race in 2017.

Christine Snow-Reaser (Maine) led the Old Orchard Beach schoolgirl team to its first state championship title in 1984 and set records that stand to this day. Christine continued her running career at Eastern Kentucky University, where she won titles her freshman and senior years. After college, she placed third twice at

the Marine Corps Marathon and won the Columbia Marathon. In 1996, Snow-Reaser competed in the Olympic Marathon Trials.

Gary Sutherland (Canada) began running in 2003 at age 43 and immediately started participating in countless races. As he became hooked, he inspired others and helped to train fellow runners. He ran his first full marathon in 2014, and he looks forward to many more. Gary heads up the Canadian Runners on Facebook, uniting runners from all over the country.

Ed Thomas (South Dakota) has completed 15 marathons and 13 ultramarathons. He is an avid trail runner, with two top 10 finishes in 100-mile events in 2014. An original member of the Minnesota-based Ninja Runners, he helps motivate and inspire runners of all abilities from all walks of life and from all across the globe.

Nancy Torres (Illinois) started running four years ago to stay in shape. When a family member got into an accident and became wheelchair bound, Nancy gained the courage to run a marathon. In 2014 she completed three marathons: Rome, Chicago, and Cancun, in addition to triathlons and ultras. She plans to complete the Steelhead Ironman in August 2015.

A husband and father, **Jared Ward** (Utah) is working toward a master's degree in statistics at Brigham Young University and pursuing a running career. As a student athlete at BYU, he earned first team All-American honors six times. He ran a 4:03 mile, and his marathon PR is 2:14, which placed him second at the USA championships in 2014.

Retired **Rich Zappen** (Illinois) is president of the Elmhurst Running Club, which has more than 250 members. He also works part time at "The Runner's Soul," a boutique running-shoe company, where he does gait analyses on customers and educates and fits them with the right shoe. Over 40 years, he has finished countless races, including 60 marathons. 