



REDDING ROAD RACE NEWSLETTER

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Redding in the Wall Street Journal!

By MELANIE LEFKOWITZ

In the decades following World War II, residents of Redding, Conn.—a rural community whose bucolic landscape had long drawn artists and nature-seekers—grew concerned about their town's increasing growth.

Determined to maintain the town's character, local leaders took steps to preserve land and control development. Today, the nearly 50-year-old Redding Land Trust protects roughly 1,600 acres, and around a third of the town's 30,000 acres is dedicated to open space.

"It's quite different, I think, than the rest of Fairfield County," says Leon Karvelis, a town selectman. "If you just dropped down here in a blindfold, you'd think you were in Vermont."

The town of about 9,000 residents remains pastoral, with an extensive network of hiking trails and a handful of working farms. Most of its housing lots are 2 acres or larger. There is little commercial development within Redding, though shops and restaurants in busier towns, including neighboring Ridgefield, are a short drive away.

The town may be quiet, but it isn't sleepy, residents say. Active institutions include the Mark Twain Library, founded by the author, which holds frequent programs as well as a popular annual book sale. The New Pond Farm, a working educational farm, hosts several events. Summertime concerts take place on the town green.

"Everything is small in scale and manageable, but I think we have all the elements of a civilized community," says Mary Anne Guitar, a founder of the Redding Land Trust and a former first selectman.

Situated 55 miles from Manhattan, Redding has a Metro-North station in its West Redding area, from which trains travel to Grand Central Terminal in about 1½

hours. Many also commute to work in Stamford, Greenwich or White Plains, brokers say.

Mark Twain moved to Redding in 1908, and lived in his Italianate mansion, Stormfield, until his death in 1910. The town still attracts many creative types seeking a small-town atmosphere with proximity to New York City, as well as young families drawn by its well-regarded public schools. Most homeowners are full-time residents, but those who own vacation houses in Redding tend to be well-integrated into the town, brokers say.

"It's a place where people come to have privacy, but in a very warm and inviting community," says Virginia Beasley, a former resident and a broker with William Pitt Sotheby's International Realty. "Communities are formed along these country roads—they become very strong neighborhoods."

Real estate consists almost entirely of single-family houses, many of them Colonials, ranging in price from around \$350,000 for a small two- or three-bedrooms to \$20 million for a large estate on hundreds of acres. The median listing price in Redding in February was \$669,000, a 6% increase from the same month in 2013, says Zillow.com. The number of sales has recently picked up, rising by 27% in 2013 from the previous year, says Paul Rabstein of Coldwell Banker Previews International.

Though the town is mostly residential, some shops, restaurants and services can be found along Redding Road in West Redding, and Black Rock Turnpike in the eastern part of the town.

Plans are under way to convert a former wire mill in the Georgetown area of Redding into a mixed-use development that could include businesses, artists' lofts and residences, says Mr. Karvelis. Officials hope the 55-acre site could eventually become a pedestrian-friendly town center.

"It gives us a major opportunity to develop a downtown," Mr. Karvelis says.

Parks: The 280-acre Topstone Park offers swimming, horseback riding, fishing,

hiking and camping with permits. It also includes a playground. Putnam Memorial State Park, the site of a winter encampment by continental troops during the Revolutionary War, includes a visitor's center and museum. The 1,756-acre Lucius Pond Ordway/Devil's Den Preserve, operated by the Nature Conservancy, with 20 miles of trails, is in Redding and Weston.

Schools: Redding public schools consist of an elementary and middle school, with a high school shared with the neighboring community of Easton.



1. YOGA AND HEALTH COACHING FOR ATHLETES BY MAGGIE CONVERSE:

If you could utilize a little help in your training, nutrition, stress management, etc. why not take advantage of Maggie's free 30 minute consultation, exclusive to RRR15 runners? If you like her program, it could benefit you while benefitting the race, as Maggie has pledged to donate 15% of program fees to the race. More from Maggie (who is also running the race):

Yoga and Health Coaching for Athletes

Preparing for an athletic event involves long hours pounding the pavement, trail, or treadmill. It also involves taking care of ourselves by ensuring we are nourishing our bodies, our minds, and our souls. It involves mindfulness of how we are managing stress. How are we tending to our career? Our relationships? Believe it or not, our health is not just based on food and exercise, though these factors do play a large role. When adding the extra component of an endurance event, it is important not to neglect these areas of our lives. Why else sign up for a race if not to thoroughly enjoy the process of training and racing while challenging the body and mind?

Sign up for a free health coaching consultation and when you sign up for a 1 to 6 month program with Health Coach Maggie Converse, 15% of the proceeds go directly to Redding Road Race. You can learn more about Maggie at <https://maggieconverse.wordpress.com/>. Contact her directly for questions and rates at maggie.converse@gmail.com.

Here is a link to Maggie's piece detailing how endurance events helped her deal with body image issues:

<https://maggieconverse.wordpress.com/2014/03/25/ironman-vs-the-bulge-spoiler-alert-ironman-wins/>

Redding Road Race runners receive a FREE 30 minute health coach phone consultation. Following their consult they will have the option to select a 1, 3, or 6 Month Program which includes:

- Weekly check-ins to re-evaluate short term goals
- Determine 2-3 long term goals to work toward
- Daily email check-ins Monday-Friday
- Weekly 30 min. phone call

Each program is personalized based on the individual's needs. We cover areas such as:

- Diet and nutrition guidance
- Training and race day nutrition guidance
- Career
- Relationships
- Managing stress

With athletes we also address the following:

- Mantras for training
- Mantras for race day
- How to cope with feelings of isolation (yes we laugh about this as athletes but it's a real thing!)
- Cultivating mindfulness for optimal nutrition when training and racing
- Using your breath as a tool to power you through your race day

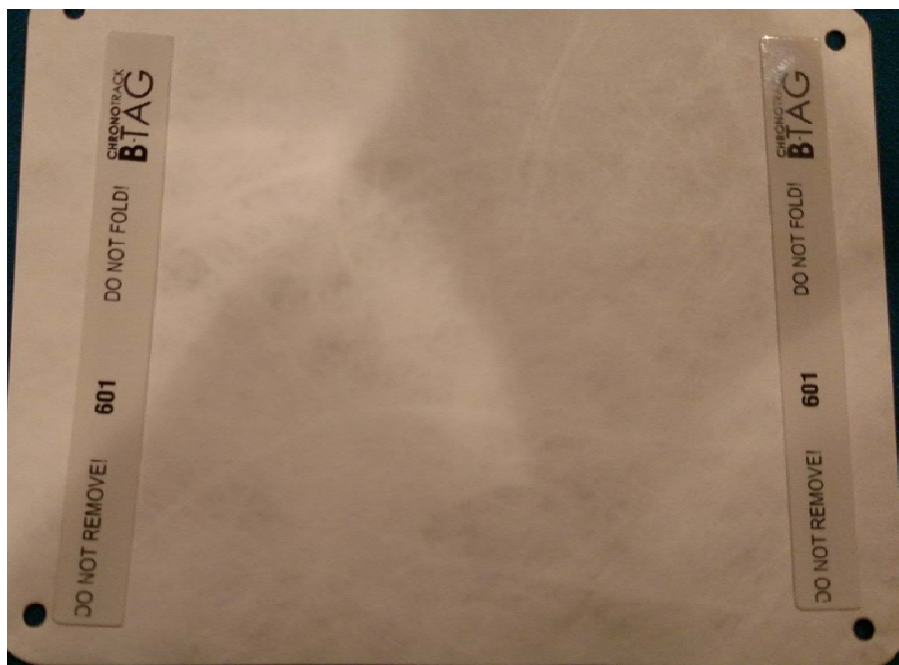
2. **PRE-RACE STRETCH**

Chiropractor Jacqueline DeMayo has volunteered to lead a pre-race stretching session to help runners get limbered up for the Redding hills. She will also be available post-race to put your bodies back together!! More details will follow.

3. BIBS



The front of a random bib



The back of the bib – see the two timing strips – they will already be on your bib, so you receive chip timing – KEEP THESE STRIPS ON THE BIB.

4. PASTA DINNER THE NIGHT BEFORE THE RACE – CAN'T BEAT THIS PRICE!! (1/4 MILE FROM NEW POND FARM)

NEW POND FARM RACER SPECIAL

Come Carb up with the Redding Boy Scouts at the
Annual Spaghetti Dinner

REDDING TROOP 15 FAMOUS ANNUAL

TWO
DINING AREAS!
EASY ACCESS TO OUR
FIRE TRUCK
TRATTORIA



SUPPORT OUR
BOY SCOUTS AND GET
A GREAT MEAL!

SATURDAY, MAY 2RD, 2015

4:45 – 8:00PM

WEST REDDING FIREHOUSE

306 Umpawaug Road, West Redding, CT

INCLUDES OUR FAMOUS
SAUCES, SALAD, ROLLS,
BEVERAGES AND
HOMEMADE DESSERTS.

ADULTS \$9 AT DOOR \$10

CHILD/SENIORS \$7, AT DOOR \$8
(12 and under/over 65)

5. TRAIN SCHEDULE DURING THE RACES

Barring any unscheduled maintenance trains, there are 2 Southbound trains and one Northbound train that pass through Redding on Sunday mornings, only one of which could affect runners. Half marathoners cross over train tracks three times and 7 milers cross over once. Good thing is these are short trains and only would delay a “lucky” runner about 15-20 seconds. Details:

- The 7:53am Southbound train stops in Redding at 7:53am. This would only delay an early start runner who’s running at a pace of 19 minute miles.
- The 9:48am Northbound train passes over the Topstone tracks (right before mile 10 for halfers and mile 3 for 7 milers). This shouldn’t affect any runners at the Redding tracks (Redding stop of 9:48am) but may affect runners at the Topstone crossing at approximately 9:45am. Halfers running a 10:30 pace may be delayed for about 15 seconds. The good thing is the train just passes by Topstone at 9:45am, there is no stop.
- The 10:53am Southbound Redding Train should not affect any runners.



6. EARLY START – WHOM IS IT FOR?

(Hint not for 7 milers, Mighty Cowers or fast half marathoners)

The early start (7:15am) is for half marathoners only who plan on running around an 11:30 minute/mile pace or slower (2:30 half marathon total time or more). It's a race courtesy to allow all runners to partake in as much of the after race festivities as possible. It's not available for 7 milers or Mighty Cowers (the Mighty Cow pre-race starts at 7:25am). Email me if you want to be added to or deleted from the early start.

7. HALF MARATHON

In this issue, we preview the Half Marathon. The map below is a bit small to read, but you can access it using this link:

<http://www.reddingroadrace.com/assets/2015HalfMap.pdf>



The 2015 course remains the same as 2013 and 2014.

START: We start on the farm again this year, about a 20 seconds walk from the pre-race festivities!! After picking up your race bag with all the race schwag in the big tent (if you haven't already at the expo the previous day), utilize one of the 25 port-o-lets have some Redding Roaster coffee, bagels and donuts from Uncle Leo's, bananas etc. then proceed to the start on the main trail of New Pond Farm. **THE RACE WILL START ON TIME, 8:00** for the half, and you start out doing a clockwise victory lap. New Pond Farm is repaving the farm loop this year with more "runnable" flat pebbles.



MILE 1: The first 6/10th of a mile is on the farm, with amazing views. There are a couple of bumps, but, if you're noticing the hills now, uh oh!!! When you exit the farm, and make a left onto Marchant Rd, be sure to view the circa 1789 school house just before mile 1. Overall, it's a pretty easy first mile as there's a significant downhill after you exit the farm.



MILE 2: This downhill leading to flat mile takes you on the beautiful Station Road then through the “heart” of Redding (lol). You’ll see the post office and our pizza sponsor- Lombardi’s. **The 7 mile course diverges from the half at the tracks as 7 milers go straight (avoiding the tracks) and the halfers go right to do a 6 mile loop.** Aid Station #1 is located at the end of Long Ridge Rd, at about mile 2.4.



MILE 3: This relatively flat and non-descript mile takes you into Danbury – be careful of the sloped footing in your initial trek into Danbury on West Redding Road. Aid Station #2 is located at mile 3.5 on your right.



MILE 4: Mile 4 starts with a short double climb followed by a nice downhill. Otherwise, a relatively flat mile is highlighted by a cool waterfall on the left, water permitting.



MILES 5/6: The race, in all seriousness, starts here as these miles are bumpy - no long hills nor very steep hills - just numerous ones. Run smart and don't lose your race here. At mile 5.2 look left and you might see some exotic animals. Late in mile 5 you'll be re-entering Redding and the 3rd Aid Station located at Camp Playland at mile 5.3. Approaching mile 6 you'll encounter the race's steepest hill on Picketts Ridge Rd. Don't let it scare you, as the easiest part of the course is next.



MILE 7: Recover from the previous 2 miles of hills on the nicest downhill part of the course on George Hull Rd. Enjoy the beauty of this one mile long, mostly downhill, undeveloped road.



MILE 8: This slightly downhill portion. in which you complete the 6 mile loop retraces mile 3. Aid Station #4 (the same as Aid Station #1) greets you right after Mile 7.

MILE 9/10: Watch for merging runners as you welcome back the 7 milers!! These relatively flat miles take you on the really cool Simpaug Turnpike and over the Simpaug Bridge. The entire 2 miles run parallel to the train tracks. Make sure to take in the views – streams, a lake, a lot of woods, maybe a train?? Aid Station #5 is at mile 9.1.



MILE 11: This mile takes you on the challenging Topstone Road into Topstone Park. The road and park are extremely pretty but there are three decent uphill you'll have to circumvent. All the hills are short, but, on the back half of a race, nothing is easy. You're rewarded here with Aid Station #6 – the famous candy/soda and cold sponge zone. The out and back starting and ending at

Chestnut Woods Rd and going into Topstone Park is 1.1 miles. It's the high five zone where you can congratulate runners going in the other direction, but body checks are NOT ALLOWED – this is a non-contact race!!



MILE 12: Mile 12 takes you on a loop by Steichens pond where you'll actually run to a beach (but luckily not on it). After doing the short loop you re-trace your steps out of Topstone Park (with Aid Station #7 – candy zone revisited) and onto the beautiful Chestnut Woods Road. This mile is an easy downhill one so revitalize and re-energize for the hiccup hills. Remember to say “hi” to runners in the out and back.



MILE 13: The final mile takes you to what I call the hiccup hills – a series of 3 quick uphill which would be easy if they weren't near the end of the race. Just keep in mind that once you get over the three, you're presented with a mostly flat to downhill last 8/10ths of a mile. Aid Station # 8 is located at mile 12.3- right after this aid station look to the right and you may see some horses.



FINISH: Take a sharp left at mile 13.05, go through the barn and the finish line is steps away. After the finish, collect your medal, get a massage and go to the big tent (steps away from the finish) for the party, food and awards.



8. **RUNNER STORY – COMPILATION FROM 2013**

I've run out of 2015 runner stories - since 2/3^{rds} of you are new to the race, I figured I'd put a story in we did a couple of years ago.

New Pond Farm, Redding, CT



RUNNING FOR LIFE

Redding, Connecticut is the quietest of quiet towns. You won't find any McMansions here nor any McDonalds, or many street signs for that matter. Granted, you might have to drive more than 5 minutes to get to the nearest grocery store, but with its charms comes slight drawbacks. In Redding, you once would have come across Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain), who lived here in the final years of his life, dying in Redding in 1910. Charlie Morton (current MLB pitcher) grew up here, Daryl Hall and Leonard Bernstein lived here, as did Marvin Lee Aday. Who is Marvin Lee Aday, you ask? Well he, of course, was the famous softball coach at the local high school. He coached his girls' team when he had time away from his side job, as Meat Loaf. Benedict Arnold also passed through the next

town over and was one of the heroes in the Battle of Ridgefield -a hero for the Colonists!

Redding is also home to The Redding Road Race, “A Run For The Cows” (www.reddingroadrace.com). Redding is so quant that the 2012 inaugural race (capped at 600) was arguably the biggest event of the year in Redding. The race, benefitting New Pond Farm Education Center (www.newpondfarm.org), was not just another Sunday race, it was a celebration of the human spirit. Every race has hundreds of runner stories, all too often not really known to others. At last May’s Inaugural Race, Race Director John McCleary became privy to some of these extraordinary stories through correspondence with the runners. “Is this Kansas”, “Dreadlock Mama,” “Lady Jane” and “Mandy” were some of the stories documented in race newsletters and shared here.

“Is this Kansas” won’t be talked about in depth here, but it’s a cute story, worth a brief mention. Brooke told her boyfriend Brian to join her in signing up for the “Run For The Cows” race in Redding, Ct in May, before it sold out. He proceeded to register for “Running with the Cows in May in Kansas and didn’t realize he signed up for the wrong race until the week before! The Redding race found a spot for him and secretly had his bib say, “IS THIS KANSAS?” Come race day, we made sure that the entire field knew about Brian, and each other, through stories like this and through the personalized bibs the race provided.



May, 2005, New Pond Farm, Redding, CT

Running for her life

Heather and her son, Elijah, were at New Pond Farm, whose 102 acres of rolling hills, glistening streams, hiking trails and, farm animals provided for peace and was an ideal place to keep a small child connected to the outside world. The farm deepened their love for animals, especially cows, and reminded Heather of

growing up near a field where several cows would graze. “I would walk to the end of the road frequently to visit and enjoy the recognition they started to give me. I found out what they liked to eat, and would give them parts of my lunch. I would hand over my apple and they would, in one swoop, swoosh it around in their mouths, eating everything but the core. They enjoyed brownies, and, amazingly, anything with wheat germ, which my mother regularly added to our apple butter and banana sandwiches. I watched them with their huge brown eyes observing me as I approached their fence. I would often miss the school bus, to my mother’s disbelief, as I would spend a little bit too much time visiting. I frequently mention my love for cows and other animals to people, and find myself saying: *Have you ever seen a cow’s eyelashes? They are the most amazing things.*” Heather awoke from her childhood daydream and viewed her tightly packed car. Heather and Elijah’s home was exactly zero miles from New Pond Farm. They were currently living out of their car.

New Pond Farm, supported by public donations, requires a small fee for membership per year, and, Heather and Elijah weren’t members. She would discreetly drive in and walk among the grounds, trying to stay under the radar. “One afternoon we pulled into the farm with the car filled with all of our possessions, and road life wearing us down. We stood outside of the car, greeting the animals we had come to give names. We stood there, when a woman approached us. I thought to myself: here it is, they have noticed us all along. They are going to tell us to leave, or pay, or something. The woman came towards us with a concerned look and asked if we needed anything? I looked to her with tears in my eyes and said: “No. We were just looking and sitting for a while.” As I spoke, I motioned to my little child, who looked to her in that moment. She put her hand upon my shoulder as I began to speak again, nervously looking for the right words. She cut me off, saying: “It’s okay. Stay as long as you would like and come back anytime. It was in that moment when she walked back to her caretaker’s house that I felt even greater love for the farm. I felt safe and relieved. I knew right then that somehow, some way, someday I would give back to New Pond Farm.”

It’s popular for one to say they’ve been to hell and back. There are marathon signs that say hell and back 26.2 miles. Heather Roles HAS been to hell and is working her way back. The story of Heather is one that starts from a frightening real yet fantastical world of drug addiction, anorexia, a near fatal

medical condition, and homelessness. As a teenager, she survived drug addiction and a severe eating disorder that required her to live in an inpatient treatment center. As an adult, she was hit by a car and almost lost the use of both of her legs. She has suffered two collapsed lungs and the corresponding surgeries to repair them. Recently, she has been diagnosed with liver disease, which will require a transplant. It is hard to hear Heather's story, without wondering how so many challenges have beset one person.

She began her road to recovery from drug addiction in the most unusual of places: following the Grateful Dead on their tours across the United States. She travelled across the country, making it to every continental state but North Dakota. It was here that she found her first sense of community. When she settled down in Connecticut and had Elijah, she needed something else to replace the demons while giving her the support to make it day by day. It was a struggle at first, but running and the running community has provided this. "When I first turned to running I used to set Elijah up on a blanket with a matchbox car at the local high School track and I could not even make it once around. It took months to run my first mile. I began meeting folks from the running community who continue, to this day, to show me an amazing amount of support." Heather is not only a regular age award winner on the local running scene; she tries to be a reciprocating source of positive energy at each event. Running helps her find respite, whether it is along empty tree-lined streets or on a crowded marathon route. Her running offers her so much more than simply a recreational activity. It has become her therapy, her catharsis, and her passage to well-being.

Years went by and Elijah and Heather continued to visit the farm. They saw their animal friends and explored the farm in depth. "Several months back I was looking through a list of the local running races, and I stumbled upon a race billed as the inaugural "Run For The Cows" race. I looked over the website, and saw that it was indeed a race to raise money for New Pond Farm. I registered immediately and then emailed the director, John, a brief note, telling him that my son and I felt a special connection to the farm. I told him that if there was anything I could do to help support the race or to drum up runners, I would be willing and able. I immediately received an email back from him welcoming me to the race. He was enthusiastic and informed me that this was as much my race as his, and he would love the help. Over the course of the next few months, I helped recruit sponsors as

well as numerous friends to join me in the race. I helped give back a little to the Farm, which has given me so much.”



Fall, 2010

Making up for lost time

Jane, or “Lady Jane” looked in the mirror and realized that, at age 57, if she didn’t do something to improve her health, she was going to be in big trouble and soon. Fortunately, despite being 100 pounds overweight, her overall health wasn’t terrible. She had borderline high blood pressure but her cholesterol was decent, had only minimal arthritis, and, no diabetes. Basically, she was treading water, but, it wasn’t sustainable without a drastic lifestyle change. She had a friend who had just lost a lot of weight on a particular program, but, Jane had always been very cynical about weight loss programs. In the past she would find herself losing a couple pounds during the week only to gain it all back, come the weekend. Her friend offered to help and promised she’d lose five pounds in the first week. She agreed that if she lost five, she would continue with the program.

Jane lost SIX and was hooked. ”That was the first step in what I consider to be nothing short of a miracle in my life. I started going to a local gym, exclusively walking on the treadmill. “I had no clue how to use the other machines and didn’t want to bother anyone, so I just avoided everything except the treadmill. The second step of the miracle occurred when a new morning attendant was hired. All the others were the type that grunted at you when you walked in and grunted at you as you walked out. Not this guy. Sam saw me sweating away on the treadmill, told me he was getting his certificate in personal training, and offered to help in any way. In essence, I ended up having a personal trainer 5 days a week for the cost of a gym membership. He taught me how to work on my core, how to use the machines, and how to vary my workouts.”

The third step in the miracle was running. As part of her weight loss program, she became a member of a self-identified on-line support group called C2-5K, Couch-To-Five-K – a program that would get Jane running. “I never thought in a million years that I would be able to run and, more so, I never thought I’d want to. I liked it! I liked the way it challenged my body and mostly I liked the feeling of rising to the challenge.”

As a result of these three miracles in her life, she lost nearly 100 pounds and was as fit as she had ever been. “My doctor almost fell over when she saw me in October. My blood pressure was down from nearly too high to perfectly normal.

My body mass index was well within the normal range. And it goes without saying that I was feeling great!! I feel like I have made up for all those years when fitness was not even on my radar, let alone something I did with any kind of regularity. Now, if I miss a scheduled morning at the gym, I get positively cranky. I didn't care if I was the last one finishing the Redding Road Race, I was running to make up for lost time!"



Running to Recover

Also around the Fall of 2010, Amanda (“Mandy”) was having a tough time at the mall. She was exhausted and had to utilize a wheelchair to finish shopping. Amanda was diagnosed with Dysautonomia about fifteen years previously. Basically, this disease causes her autonomic nervous system to not function properly. The most common symptoms are a sudden spike in heart rate and drop in blood pressure, which leads to episodes of passing out and seizures. For much of the last 15 years this illness has been debilitating, making it hard for her to stand upright for even ten minutes at a time. These years of struggling to get proper treatment were some of the most difficult in her life. Amanda was close to giving up.

She eventually learned that symptom management in Dysautonomia, while not easy by any means, is possible. What this illness has taken from Amanda, she’s now fighting to recover. “With the help of my amazing doctor, my friends in the Dysautonomia Youth Network of America, and my remarkable family, I began working hard at reconditioning my body. I started with a recumbent bike, worked my way up to yoga and aerobic exercise, and then, inspired by my husband, who enjoys running, I began to jog and run. The first time I ran on a treadmill for ten whole minutes without stopping, I cried.”

She no longer focuses on the bad times and her illness does not define her. She belongs to a wonderful and supportive group called the Dysautonomia Youth Network of America, Inc., DYNA for short, and they helped her through her worst symptoms, teaching her that sometimes a shift in perspective is the best medicine. “The body truly does follow the mind, and though I was not able to cure myself just by wishing it, I was able to start focusing on the positive and living with hope for the future. I learned that in spite of my limitations, I did not have to live my illness, but rather I could work towards my own version of recovery.” This is a constant battle. If she stops exercising, her symptoms begin to re-emerge, so she needs to stay motivated. “I needed a goal to keep myself going, so I decided to try for a race. I signed up for the Redding Road Race because I was immediately

struck by the enthusiasm and excitement everybody had for this event. I felt it was a good match for my first race. I even went so far as to bring up the challenge to the young people of DYNA, who are fighting their own battles everyday with so much hope and courage. I suggested that those who were ready look into road races in their areas and begin training as a part of their recovery journeys. The Redding race has further reaching influence than you may realize!”



May 6, 2012 – Race Day

Running for her life continued

As Heather stood at the start line discussing the possible terrain, she felt connected to the farm and to her fellow runners. The first loop took them out around the beautiful farm grounds. It was over the same grass hills that Elijah and Heather would look for four leaf clovers on, eat peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and re-energize. She ran by the cows, sneaking in a quick hello to her friends, before exiting the farm for the country roads of Redding. “The race was challenging with a lot of short rolling hills. The town of Redding still looks like a typical New England town, and has evaded the pretentious atmosphere of many of the more developed towns. The yards were managed with the land, and not against. Many of the old houses look weathered, and lived in. The finish brought the runners back to the farm, through the dairy barn and down a dirt road”. Amanda finished the race, with an embrace from her husband, and shortly after her, so did Jane. Watching Jane finish the race was her son Andrew (more on Andrew in a minute). Heather had an elated feeling at the finish of feeling like a part of New Pond Farm. She had paid the farm back in a little way for all it had done for her and Elijah.

Afraid of not having enough food, John ordered about twice as much pizza as was needed and the friends of New Pond Farm baked enormous amounts of cookies and muffins. Heather and Elijah gathered the leftover food to bring to the Dorothy Day soup kitchen in a nearby town. “This is where my story of the farm comes full circle, as things often do in life if you are fortunate enough to live through them and, of course, be aware of the circle. We drove down a road in a rough neighborhood a few towns over from Redding. As we approached the drop off, we saw many homeless people standing outside. I sensed that Elijah was becoming acutely aware of these unique surroundings. He stood up straight as he waited at the back of the car for me to hand him boxes of pizza. A man of around forty years old came over to help us. He was tall with long black hair. He was dirty, had rough hands, and smelled of cigarette smoke. He looked tired and a little sad. It was a kind of sad that Elijah and I knew and understood. He then reached into the car and grabbed a box of sodas. He looked remarkably similar to Elijah’s father; it was as if I could hear my son’s thoughts as he followed the man into the

soup kitchen. After dropping of the food and beverages, we said our goodbyes and walked to the car. I watched Elijah, and in that moment, he seemed years older. I quietly said to him: That man was nice. He reminded me of your Dad. You know, this could be Dad, if his parents didn't take care of him. He then looked at me, and paused for a minute as he took my hand. He said: Yes Mom. You know, this could be any of us.”

2013

Making up for lost time, Part II

Andrew watched his Mom cross the finish line and although, very proud of her, he couldn't help being depressed about himself. “I had had enough. I was 323 lb., a 3x shirt and size 50 pants. These were the largest clothes I could buy at the local "we have everything" store. It was the last straw! I had seen my Mom lose close to 100 lb. and at that very moment I decided that if she could do it so could I!”

Andrew is a fairly new Dad, he has a two year old and an infant. He has been morbidly obese since 7th grade when he tipped the scales at 279 pounds! He has not seen a number less than 200 on the scales since elementary school. “Just as many others with weight issues face years of ridicule, so too did I face day after day of scorn. The first time I heard the word "obese" was when we had to do health screenings in 7th grade and my main tormenter looked at the records the nurse was writing and saw the word. He then proceeded to ask the teacher, in front of the class, what obese means..."Is John Candy obese?" Well we all know he was, but the teacher, oblivious to what was happening said...no. So now I was the fat kid fatter than the fat actor. That year, along with all the usual taunts, I had a fresh set all to myself: "Oreo double-stuff" and "jello jigglers". That summer started my journey on the yo-yo... I have ridden the diet yo-yo up and down the scales more times than I care to count or remember, each time feeling less healthy and more defeated than the last.”

When he started his road to recovery he was so heavy he had to rely solely on the weight loss program for the first 3 months. After that he would walk for 30

to 45 minutes 4 to 5 days per week. He began a running regimen in July, 2012 but, tweaked a knee and went back to walking. When the weather changed in the fall he added stair climbing. “I found a series of flights of stairs that I would walk 3 times per day for a total of 90 flights per day.” Finally, after losing enough weight to take ample stress off of his knees he was able to incorporate running back into his program. Now he runs on a treadmill 3 days per week hoping to work his way up from 40 minutes to 70 minutes over the next couple months. He also has started biking 2 days a week to mix it up.

Currently he has lost 113 pounds in just under a year! “The best part of his journey has been his new found athletic ability and enjoyment of physical activity. Like his Mom, he actually likes running! “The activity that struck fear into my heart at its very thought is now something I do voluntarily. I loved soccer and football when I was younger, but at such high weights, I couldn’t even run the warm-up laps. As of the right now I can comfortably run 4 miles in 40 minutes. I’m not going to blow the doors off of anybody, but I am doing it! Watching my Mom finish last year’s race totally inspired me to take the step to start the weight loss program. I saw her change her life and wanted the same. Having 2 small children also plays a huge part in my motivation! I want to be alive for them!” Jane and Andrew will be running Redding together on May 5th, at a combined weight of over 200 pounds less than they once were. Andrew’s kids/Jane’s grandkids will be waiting at the finish line.



Doing it for Dad

Nancy is coming from Cincinnati in May, 719 miles from Redding, CT. More impressive than the miles is that Nancy is visiting us when, on the same day, the Flying Pig Marathon, in Cincinnati, is occurring.

As a child, Nancy always looked up to her father. Although he was small in stature (5'4"), his competitiveness and determination were large. Virgil was captain of his baseball and basketball teams and senior class secretary. Although they didn't have much money, her parents felt it was important to take a family vacation every summer, so they would pack all 5 children in the old blue Buick and take off for 2 weeks. Vacations typically consisted of camping, swimming, hiking and enjoying nature. "We always felt sorry for our friends who had to stay in a hotel on their vacations!" They camped and hiked in most all of Ohio's state parks, as well as Yellowstone National Park, Glacier National Park, Smokey Mountains and several other states and parks. "My father was fearless and instilled a sense of adventure and a love of travel and nature in all of us children."

Virgil didn't start running until he was 45 years old, taking up running in steel-toed work boots and Chino work pants to rehabilitate a broken ankle. He eventually purchased his first pair of running shoes and wore holes in the uppers and held the soles together with "shoe-goo". He decided to start running 5 and 10K races with some of the guys in the neighborhood, eventually working up to running full marathons. After a few marathons, he was hooked. "He'd come home and tell us about the race, how many people were in his age group and where he finished. When I saw the excitement in his eyes, I thought there must be something to this running craze, so I decided to run cross country the last 2 years of high school in order to get in better shape for softball, my favorite sport. After building up mileage, I remember Dad asking me if I'd like to take a run with him. We ran at a nice leisurely pace, talking about school, work, our family and mostly baseball - if the Reds were going to make it to the Post Season. My dad taught me several important tidbits about running. First, he explained the importance of breathing correctly - breathe from the diaphragm instead of the chest so you don't tense up and your lungs can expand properly. Second, he told me to listen to my body when it came to my stride. His stride was short, with his legs working up and down like pistons and it worked for him. Third, Dad emphasized leaving all your efforts out

on the course. As to prove his point, he wanted to see how much I had left after our 8 mile run. We turned back into the neighborhood and I could sense Dad's pace increasing slightly. I thought if he could run a bit faster, so could I. As we turned on to our street we were in an all-out sprint, both of us laughing and neither wanting to give in. I was able to use Dad's advice while running in a cross-country meet. I had it in my mind to stay with the 5th runner on our team for as long as I could. After a couple miles I passed her and wanted to leave it all on the course. Turning into the final straightaway with only 100 yards to go, all I heard was my soft-spoken father say "NOW NANCY". I sprinted as hard as I could, finished 4th for the team, and finally got that runner's high that my father spoke of."

After about 20 years of running and at the age of 65, Virgil stopped running and switched to riding bikes and walking. This was also when he started showing signs of Alzheimer's disease. "I noticed when I walked with Dad, we talked about the same subjects – work, school days, family, and how the Reds were looking this year. I did most of the talking then, but Dad was always interested in those subjects." As time progressed he could no longer ride his bike safely and his walks were limited to around the neighborhood block.

In 2009 Nancy decided to train for a half marathon. After training runs, Virgil would ask her how her legs felt, if she was stretching enough and her water intake. He also wanted to know pace, distance and which route. "I loved running our "country block" which was also Dad's favorite route. I would tell him about the wildlife and how the crops looked. By the twinkle in his eyes, I knew he completely understood what I was talking about. When I completed the Long Beach, California International Half Marathon, I couldn't wait to get home to tell Dad about the race and show him my finisher's medal and all the other goodies. He wanted to know everything about the race; what the course was like, how many people ran, weather, etc. so I happily recalled every moment of the race and the adventures afterward. At that point I realized what I needed to do: since I inherited the love of travel and sport from my parents, I thought it would be fitting to run a half marathon in every state, and have a little adventure in every state." She was going to do it all in her father's honor. He was overjoyed when she told him she would run a race in all 50 states for him since he couldn't run anymore. She promised to report back to him after every race, telling him all the details. "I decided to complete the races and enjoy every moment for Dad. I stopped along

the courses and took pictures, talked to other runners and tried to record and remember everything I could for Dad. I'm usually in the back of the pack and don't care about my time. Dad didn't care either."

Virgil passed away May 18, 2011. At the wake many people remembered him as being the quiet little guy who was always running or biking, his athleticism as a young man and the love he had toward his family. His funeral was May 21, fittingly the same day as their church sponsored half marathon, Hands 4 Haiti. "Prior to the race, the pastor had everyone make the "victory" sign with both hands. One hand was for Victory, the other was for Virgil and he dedicated the race to my father."

"I have had several people ask me why I would want to run so many races over the course of the next few years. My response is always the same – I'm doing it for Dad. Although he is no longer with me in person I still feel his spirit when I'm running or walking. When I struggle during a run, I remember how much Dad struggled in the last few years of his life. That always put things back into perspective for me and makes finishing a run that much fulfilling." The Redding Run for the Cows in Redding, Ct will be her 22nd state and 25th half marathon completed. Her bib will say, Doing it for Dad. "I wish Dad could have been able to see me finish this quest in his honor but I know that every time I go for a run, finish a race and flash the Victory sign, Dad is there right alongside me, perhaps helping me up the hills in Redding in May."



26 acts of kindness

Jean lives in Chicago and has two sisters who live in Sandy Hook, CT. Chicago is 844 miles from Redding, Sandy Hook is only a half marathon away.

Jean's family moved to Redding in 1984, when she was only 12 and ever since, and no matter where she has moved to – she always considers it her home. “My father passed away when I was only 15, but my mom loved the Redding community and schools so much that she felt it was the best place to raise us. She had the support of so many close friends, which is really what Redding is all about. To this day, she is an active part of the town - recording secretary for nearly every town committee and the school boards, she puts the annual report together, and now manages the town Facebook page (with my help and consultation as a social media guru). My mom, Mary, still lives in the same house where we grew up.”

Jean has three sisters and a brother. Two of her sisters have settled in Sandy Hook with their husbands, and each have two children. “I have the most amazing nieces and nephews (ages 6 1/2, 5, 3 1/2 and 3)....so much so that I try to fly home from Chicago once every six weeks or so to see them. “ As we all know, tragedy struck on December 14th, 2012. Her sister Suzen and her family live just a half mile or so away from where the shootings happened. Her other sister Karen lives about a mile and a half away. One of her nephews Andrew, attended Sandy Hook Elementary School in the Pre-K program, 3 days a week. Thankfully, he did not attend on the day the shooting occurred. Her niece Lauren, a 1st grader, attends one of the other elementary schools in Newtown. Sadly, she knew several of the children that were killed. One in particular, Olivia Engel, was especially close to the family. “When my sister and brother in law and Lauren first moved to Sandy Hook, she was nearly 2, and the Engel's were one of their first friends. Lauren and Olivia quickly bonded - and I can recall with great delight and bittersweet sadness all the birthday parties and other festivities that Olivia and her parents came to at my sister's house. Olivia was a joy. When I learned that evening of the shooting that she was one of the children lost I was devastated - as if it were my own niece. She was that special to our family. In another random connection - Olivia's grandfather was my shop teacher at John Read Middle School in Redding (where my sister Suzen teaches science now).”

It was a week before she could make it home - and in that week, she learned of NBC's Ann Curry's 26 Acts of Kindness movement. "I immediately knew I had to do something and I ended up making homemade chocolate covered pretzels - 26 bags of them with names of each of the children and teachers. I gave them away to strangers when I travelled home to Redding for the holidays. It was an amazing experience and I knew I didn't want to stop there." She had long wanted to start running again to get back in shape, and to get back to the fun she used to have doing races. "I first started running in 2001. My very first race was the YMCA World's Largest Run 5k. I had never run before and while I was a swimmer, and athlete in high school - I never liked running. I worked for the YMCA in Boston and was motivated by a coworker to do it. I remember feeling so sore afterwards! I never thought I would ever get bit by the running bug. Well, that was just the beginning." Four months later she was doing her first half marathon. "For me, it's just about the personal achievement and sense of accomplishment to finish. I have never quit a race. I've done countless 5K's, a handful of 10K's, a couple 15K's, seven half marathons and finished two full marathons (Marine Corps in 2003 and San Diego Rock and Roll in 2006)." It was during the training for the second marathon that she hurt herself, and probably should not have run it. She developed IT band syndrome during the training and fell apart around mile 16 or so. "My hips hurt badly, but I kept going, knowing I just had to finish, which I did. I had to take a lot of time off after that and unfortunately gained weight." Quitting a job and seeing a personal relationship end also added to her demotivation. She moved to Chicago in 2007 and began running sporadically but found that she had lost a lot of her speed.

She started formal training runs on January 1st of this year and randomly decided to do a 10K, the Chicago Polar Dash, just about 10 days into the new year with a good friend of hers. "After we picked up our race bibs, the night before, I was inspired - THIS was going to be the first of my year long 26 Acts of Kindness." She decided right then that she would complete 26 races of all distances - one in each memory and honor of a child. She ran that race the next day in honor of Ana Marquez-Greene with Ana's name on her bib; and surprisingly ended up running a personal best for the 10K. "I'd like to think that I had an angel helping me."

Her trip home to run The Redding Road Race is going to be a very emotional one, to say the least. Jean will be running the race for Charlotte Bacon

because of Charlotte's love of animals. Charlotte's website description (<http://newtownkindness.org/meetcharlotte/>): "The family will forever remember her beautiful smile, her energy for life, and the unique way she expressed her individuality, usually with the color pink. Charlotte never met an animal she didn't love and since the age of two wanted to be a veterinarian." Jean is very excited about running her home town race, and will run with FOR CHARLOTTE on her bib.



This race isn't really about the race at all, it's all about the wonderful journeys that help get these amazing people to Redding on May 5th. Something that started barely a year ago as an idea for an event to showcase Redding, while raising some money, has turned out to be a very special event for all of us. We've been rewarded with unbelievable experiences and lifelong friends. As our runners prove, running provides fitness, confidence, recovery, sanity, balance and maybe most of all hope. We look forward to seeing Heather, Jane, Andrew, Amanda,

Nancy, Jean and all the other runners toeing the starting line and finishing triumphantly. I visited the farm the other day, and Heather is right, Cow's do have the most amazing eyelashes!!



Running for her life continued

Just last week Heather was having a tough day, a tough run, winter blues. She was at about mile seven out of a twelve mile run when she stopped dead in her tracks and remembered that the worn down dilapidated house she was running past echoed loudly with bad memories. “I stood there on the street, I could almost smell the inside of the musty house that I stood in years and years before. A few tossed mattresses on the floor, served as furniture with a metal mirror in the bathroom, like one of those from a rest area, not really glass, just a distorted metal reflection. I remember standing in front of that dirty piece of metal, throwing cold water on my face, catching a glimpse of myself, 18 years old, and thinking I am going to die here today.” In that second, those memories made any agony she was presently

feeling completely vanish. She stood up straight, ran past that house and thought, "Man have I come a long, long way, I need to remember this more often."

Heather will be running her 4th Redding Road Race on May 3rd, 2015



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Cheers,

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