

Marathon

FM native goes the distance many times over; he plans to run 21 marathons ... this year alone.

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Staff Writer

Kevin Brosi does not look like a runner. Especially not a marathon runner.

Especially not a marathon runner who just recently ran his 19th marathon ... this year!

But Brosi, 54, and a Fort Madison native who now lives in Texas, went from being a once-every-nine years marathon runner to an at-least-one-a-month marathon runner (He's run one for 84 consecutive months).

He ran 12 two years ago and 17 in 2008. He scheduled 21 for 2009 and he has only two more left ... before starting over again in 2010.

A marathon is 26 miles, 385 yards. To put that into perspective, it's about the equivalent of running from the Visitor's Center on Second Street and Avenue H to Shopko at 48th Street and Avenue L ... and back ... three times!

Healthy activity

Brosi still has family living in the area, although his parents, Dorothy and Jerry, and sister, Beth Cross, all died in 2007. Brosi graduated from Iowa State University in 1977 and then headed for a warmer climate.

His parents died from complications of years of smoking, and their health problems years earlier motivated Kevin to take up running.

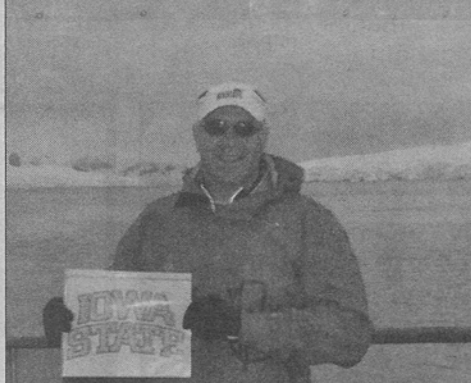
"I try to live healthy," he said. "I was the opposite of (my parents) when it came to watching my health. I wish they had stopped smoking."



(Above) When not running 26 miles, 285 yards, Kevin Brosi (right) finds time to climb mountains with his only son, Heath. They are shown here after climbing Mt. Adams in Washington.

(Right) Kevin Brosi holds up a banner proclaiming his alma mater, Iowa State, after finishing a marathon race at Antarctica, the South Pole.

Antarctica Marathon & Half-Marathon



Brosi ran his first marathon in 1986 but waited nine years to run the second one. In between he did bicycling and adult soccer for healthy exercise. "It's hard to train for a marathon," he said.

But in 1995, a friend challenged him to run another one, and so he did.

Then there was another dormant period until his son, Heath — inspired by his dad — put on his own pair of running shoes.

Then it was Heath who inspired his dad to get back into the marathon groove.

"I had run marathons," Brosi said in a

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Man



The best trophy Kevin Brosi ever received for running a marathon is the Goofy Award at Disney World. Brosi has run at least one marathon a month for the past 84 months.

A Mountain of Marathons

After running more than 100 marathons in his life, Fort Madison native Kevin Brosi has compiled a list about them:

Most thrilling: Qualifying for the Boston Marathon ('04) in the 2003 White Rock Marathon (3:29.31)

Overall favorite: Boston, 2004

Favorite course: White Rock Marathon, Texas

Most difficult: Chicago, 2007, the year of the extreme heat

Most extreme: Antarctica, 2009

Easiest: Oklahoma City, 2008

Best trophy: Disney's Goofy Award

Most emotional: Kentucky Derby, 2007, shortly after losing his father and his sister, knowing his mother was battling for her life.

Second most thrilling: Finishing his 50th state at the Community First Fox Cities Marathon in Appleton, Wisc.

Most fun: Finishing his 100th.

Marathons

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phone interview while he was on the road in San Jose, Calif., "but he ran them fast."

Heath, now 27, ran his first marathon at 19 and qualified right away for the Boston Marathon. "He inspired me to get back into it. When I watched Heath running in Boston," Brosi said, "I got re-interested. I started training."

He set his sights on the White Rock Marathon in Dallas, Texas, a race named after a lake in Dallas. That was the site of his first marathon years earlier.

As he trained for the December, 2002, White Rock race, Brosi noticed that Houston had a marathon in January of 2003. "I wondered if I could run two marathons a month apart," Brosi said.

Little did he know that an addiction was forming.

"As soon as I ran White Rock, I noticed 'Cow Town' (Fort Worth) had (a marathon) in February. I thought, 'What if I could run three (in three months)?"

Oh, and here's a race in Abilene in March, and why limit yourself to Texas? There's one in Oklahoma City in April.

As crazy as that may seem to the average person who considers a jog around Central Park an exercise program, Brosi is not alone.

"There's quite a few people like me," he said. "There's a large number, but we're so far apart."

They usually meet up with each other at marathons. Brosi met a "50-stater," which is any runner whose goal is to run a marathon in each of the 50 states.

"By that time, I decided to do one race a month," Brosi said. "He got me into the next level."

Then he found the Maniacs (no snide comments, please). Their goal is to run a marathon as often as they can, even if it's the rare opportunity to run four marathons in four days. That's known as a "quadzilla," and Brosi hasn't done that yet.

He has done some "ultras," such as a 50-kilometer (31-mile) race but that was mostly so he could say he did one.

Along the way, with these "long-distance relationships," fellow marathoners are surprised that he doesn't have the build of a runner and yet he can run so many marathons with few injuries.

As tiring as it is to just read about all that running, note that this is just a "hobby" for Brosi. He works for Cisco, a network company, and enjoys time with his wife, Lucy, and five children: Amy (the oldest at 31), and Casey, Heath, Jenny and Sharon.

Amy has run some, but Heath is the only competitive runner of the children, and even he has switched to something different: climbing mountains (in another case of "like son, like father," Kevin joined Heath back in June to climb Mt. Adams and Mt. Rainier, both in Washington state).

Lucy supports Kevin's hobby but does seek his list of races before he heads off to places far and wide. She even goes with him on many of his weekend excursions (the marathon in Hawaii wasn't a very hard sell).

Speaking of far and wide, did we mention that in May this year, one of his 21 scheduled marathons was in Antarctica? Don't worry, May is "summer" at the South Pole.

He also ran at the recent Marine Corps Marathon (for the fifth time) in Washington, D.C., as did James Poe of Fort Madison. But with 36,000 runners, it's not likely they ran into each other.

Anyone who has run just one or two marathons knows about "hitting the wall" at about the 20-mile mark. The body finally has had enough and isn't going to take any more.

"We see that a lot with first-timers: They go out too fast; they expend too much energy. (Endurance) is not a linear thing. They end up really hurting at the end."

So do prolific marathoners such as Brosi not experience that?

Yes, they do. The difference: "We know what the hurt's like. We know what our tolerant levels are." Since runners such as Brosi have finished many marathons, they don't have the doubts that a newbie would have.

Brosi also runs with electrolyte packs. "They have a sugar mixture in them, and they help you prevent hitting the wall."

Brosi hasn't been back to Fort Madison since his parents died, but he remembered that on previous trips home how his mother always encouraged him to take the trails or run up Pea Vine, Chalk Ridge Road and down by the river.

He would start at his parent's home at 1305 E and run to Chalk Ridge Road, to Oakland Cemetery and then back to town.

That may not be considered an official marathon.

But at least it's warmer here than in Antarctica.