

November/December 2015 *Wingfoot* Spotlight: Long-Time Member Celebrates Life, Friendship through Running

By Amanda Kowaleski



If you've ever participated in an Atlanta Track Club event or program, chances are you have come across Bob Wells. He became a member 10 years ago and has been sharing his passion for running ever since.

Wells is an Atlanta Track Club ambassador, a volunteer run leader for various In-Training programs and a Kilometer Kids coach. Additionally, he participates in many of our events each year. But for Wells, running is more about connecting with others than pursuing solitary goals. "Running has been such a wonderful gift to me, a life saver, really," says Wells. "I can think of no better way to give back than by sharing the gift with others."

Wells' running journey began during a time of transition in his life. He had just kicked a 20-year smoking addiction and was hoping to save his marriage as well as lose a little weight. "I wasn't huge, but I couldn't run 100 yards without feeling like the next gasp would be my last," he recalls. Still, he kept going, and now averages at least 35 miles per week.

This year Wells ran the Boston Marathon on behalf of Kilometer Kids. He had "zero plans" to run a marathon this year until he came upon the charity runner opportunity. He signed up for the Spring Full Marathon Training program. Wells says he enjoyed the, "challenging workouts led by dedicated, energetic, enthusiastic and passionate run leaders. The friends you make are lifelong friends!"

"You know when Bob is onsite at training as you hear the emphatic 'BOOM-yah!!' as he cheers on the participants and brings the community together with his supportive, fun spirit," says Sue Payne, Atlanta Track Club's director of community outreach and membership. "He is the first to share how running and choosing a healthy lifestyle has had a positive impact on his life and you truly feel he wants to help provide that opportunity for others."

In Boston, Wells finished strong in 3:52:17 while raising thousands of dollars for the Kilometer Kids program. It is his best running memory to date. "Every moment and stride was magical, just magical," he remembers. He plans to return to Boston – next year as a volunteer – and he has some big plans after that. "My goal is to run the Albany Marathon on March 5, 2016 in a time of 3:25:00 to qualify for Boston in 2017."

While Wells has big goals for himself, to him, running is so much more than a solitary pursuit of the next achievement. It's about connecting with others. "I celebrate the gifts of life, friendship and giving back through running."

