

RUNNING TO THE FINISH LINE by Rik Akey

One day, I realized I was coming up on 40. My whole life, I've always been overweight, and I've never been an active person. My father is a big man, and he's started to have some health problems because of it. I started seeing him as a preview of coming attractions if I didn't start doing SOMETHING to get in shape. So when I started working with Myra in January of '08, I didn't have any specific goal in mind, I just knew I needed to start doing something. I saw slow but steady progress working with her twice a week.

About October of last year, I had my first big breakthrough. On two weeks' notice, I decided to do the US Bank stair climb. I was nervous and intimidated at the thought of being out in public, not feeling confident about my appearance or ability level. But I did it. I got to the top, and I felt like I could do anything. So, I thought, what else can I do?

The next day, I took a co-worker up on her challenge to run a 5K. I've never run any distance in my life. Maybe down to the mailbox and back, and that's huffing and puffing. Again, Myra got me started on a program of slow but steady progress. It was a month before I could run a mile on the treadmill. The day I did, I remember punching my fist in the air. It was the furthest I had ever run in my life.

In February, we made a trip to a shoe store for runners, and I got a good pair of running shoes, designed for my feet and the way I run. For \$70, it was night and day. If you are going to run, do your body a favor, and get good shoes.

We ramped up the distance gradually, then started adding a bit of speed. When I hit three miles on the treadmill, we moved outside. That was a new challenge, with wind and hills and traffic and temperature. But after a couple weeks, that was easier too.

The day of the race, all I had to be concerned about was being around all the people. I had practiced every other aspect of the run. I was only a little nervous. Mostly, I was anxious to prove my running mantra true: "I got this." And I did have it. I ran the entire distance without stopping to walk, and there were an awful lot of people who finished after me. I felt amazing!

And now, that mile run I barely finished in December is an easy warm-up. I'm again asking, if I can do this, what else can I do? My next goal is a 10K in July. And though I have yet to run anywhere near that distance, I feel confident that I will get there... with slow and steady progress.