



Her Brother's **Keeper**

The loss of a brother guides Wendy Tumlin across the finish line of her first marathon.

By Kevin Fritz

Sometimes it takes a defining moment in life to realize your true potential and discover your true passion. That moment came for **Wendy Tumlin** of **Winter Park** when her brother, **Ronnie**, was diagnosed with brain cancer in 2006.

“A friend from church asked me to join her in a 5K, and I did as a way to deal with my brother’s cancer,” says Tumlin, 36. Before that, running as a sport or hobby never entered her mind. Now she thinks everyone needs to put a marathon on their “bucket list.”

Three years following that chance run to ease her pain, and two years after Ronnie passed away, she ran her first marathon on Oct. 11, 2009, in Chicago. Her brother’s inspiration took her from 5Ks to 10Ks to half marathons to finally grabbing that proverbial brass ring.

The Windy City for Wendy

The Windy City’s annual 26.2 mile race is chosen by many first-timers because the track is relatively flat and the spectator sup-

port is said to be second to none. And although this Floridian had to endure 29 degree weather and 45,000 other runners, she believes that because of the “certain excitement in the air,” it was easier than running a half-marathon. Her goal was to finish in less than five hours; she did it in 4hours, 57minutes.

“I never thought I could run a marathon,” she admits. “Now I think anyone can do it with proper training.” Tumlin trains with three different groups—Track Shack’s MarathonFest, Winter Park Dawgs, and Orlando Runners Club—which gives her flexibility when life gets in the way. And while training is an integral part of a marathoner’s life, so is learning to deal with pain. She has endured a sprained ankle, shin splints and other aches and pains, but it never deters her. “I always find ways to run through it.”

For the Chicago marathon, Tumlin began training June 1, 2009, running three days a week, and supplementing that with three days in the gym. Through it all, though, she didn’t allow it to alter her life, besides not staying out as late on Friday

nights. She still found the time to continue her volunteer work at a homeless shelter and her commitment to the Junior League.

Fundraising Fun Runs

Fresh off her first marathon, Tumlin now wants to parlay her new-found love of running into a way to raise money for brain cancer, similar to breast cancer’s Race for the Cure concept, or Team Diabetes, which raises money during marathon training.

“My brother is the main reason why I keep up with it,” she says. “He’s my inspiration.” So, to raise awareness, her plan is to run either a half or a full marathon in all 50 states.

And with Ronnie by her side, I wouldn’t bet against her.

Put Your Best Foot Forward

Before you sign up for that marathon, here are a few tips to help get you started and keep you motivated:

- Even if you are in perfect health, check with your doctor first and let him or her know you plan on running your first marathon.
- Buy the right running shoes. Believe it or not there is a lot more to it than just what feels good in the shoe store. What fits your running style, foot type, and level of experience should also be considered. Finding the right sports bra will mean a lot too.
- Keep in mind that although it doesn’t change much, the weather does change here in Florida and you will need clothing for your training, which should span about six months. You will need running clothes that can withstand wet, hot and chilly weather.
- Start with a beginner training schedule. In this schedule, time is less important than simply finishing for the beginner.
- Always warm up and stretch before your runs and cool down with some good stretches afterwards.
- Eat good food. If you already eat a healthy diet, that’s great, but you will probably need to follow a runner’s meal plan given to you by your doctor or nutritionist before and after workouts. Also, don’t forget to refuel during your long runs. Any runs longer than 90 minutes usually require re-

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“I never thought I could run a marathon.”



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Tumlin insists that anyone can run a marathon with proper training.

- hydration with sodium-laced drinks.
- Gradually increase the distance of one long run each week, usually by no more than one or two miles per week.
- The main purposes of your long run are to build your endurance, practice spending lots of time on your feet, teach your body to burn fat as fuel and to build physical and mental strength.
- Most running injuries can be prevented by wearing the proper shoes, stretching, and not doing too much too soon.
- Keeping motivated can be tough. Keep a running journal to help. Inspirational quotes can be great too.
- Mental preparation is important. Run your own race. Don't worry what others are doing or how they are performing. Break up the race in smaller segments. Don't get too emotional. Stay calm.
- Right before the race you may experience lots of anxiety. Don't worry, that

is normal. Deep breathing and sticking with your training schedule should help with some of that anxiety.

- To help get prepared for your marathon, get familiar with the road and/or race path. Check out the organizers' Web site and ask questions.
- The tapering period is a critical part of your marathon training. During the last couple of weeks of your training, it's important that you taper, or cut back your mileage, to give your body and mind a chance to rest and recover.
- If you are running a race out of town make a list of all the things you'll need before you go. You don't want to forget anything.
- Ask your friends and family for support during training as well as on race day. Inspiring signs, cheers and goofy costumes can be really helpful. **L**

Source: *About.com*

Find out more about MarathonFest and how you can start training for your first marathon at CentralFlorida-Lifestyle.com.