

FOOD & LIVING

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Charleston couple use a moderate regimen in marathon training

Tim and Jenny Mayo began running four years ago and now compete in half-marathons and marathons together. The Charleston couple plans to run the 40th Charleston Distance Run Sept. 1.

by **Monica Orosz**
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Editor's note: This is the first in a summer series about local runners who are training for the 40th Charleston Distance Run.

CHARLESTON, W.Va. - The black-and-white computer-printed map of the United States is Tim and Jenny Mayo's best training guide.

As they tick off a marathon or half-marathon in each state, son Jackson gets to color it in. The goal is a crayon-filled map.

When it comes to running, the couple that runs together gets to see a lot of neat cities together. Already, they've visited Washington, D.C.; Austin, Texas; New Orleans; Richmond, Va.; and Myrtle Beach, S.C.

The Charleston residents look forward to New York and Boston and adventures out West. South Dakota - well, we'll see.

So far, he has completed four marathons and she's completed three. They've done 10 half-marathons.

They've done a 50K - that's 31 miles - ultra-marathon right here in West Virginia. This weekend, they plan to run the Highlands Sky Trail Run, a 40-mile race through Monongahela National Forest and Canaan Valley State Park.

This from two people who usually don't run more than three times a week and never more than 15 miles at a time, even when training for a marathon.

"That is designed for me, so I can still be running 10 years from now," Tim said.

Their method: train faster and lower distances, then ramp it back and race at longer distances. They'll train at 8-minute miles or a bit faster; race pace is 9 1/2 to 10 minutes a mile.

"We're not winning medals, but we're finishing in the top 10 percent," Jenny said. "We did better when we stopped following all those running programs."

In New Orleans in March, they finished 1,251 and 1,252 out of 13,086 runners.

On the list of races for this summer is the shorter but still challenging Charleston Distance Run, where you can bet you'll see Tim and Jenny running together, her just a step or two ahead, him keeping an eye on his watch.

Jenny, 41, doesn't like to be behind Tim, but she wants him close by because he's in charge of pace. Tim, 46, understands his role perfectly. He loves climbing hills; she prefers flat stretches and downward slopes.

She takes off like a shot at the start, her nervous energy setting a 7-minute pace for the first couple miles before she slows down and he catches up and evens their pace. He also watches the course, using hand signals to alert her to upcoming turns.

The Mayos were active in adult league soccer and tennis before they began running just a few years ago.

"Unless I was chasing balls, I hated running," Jenny said.

When he was 40, Tim had his thyroid gland removed and was stunned to hear a doctor say he would never be fit again, that he would lose energy and muscle mass.

"I remember thinking, 'I'm going to start running,'" he said.

In 2008, when he was 42, he set a New Year's resolution to read the entire Bible and to run a marathon. He bought a "Bible by the Day" book and a beginner's training guide to running a marathon.

"Well, I ended up reading half the Bible and doing a half-marathon that year," he said. "The next year, I finished the Bible and I ran a marathon."

Meantime, Jenny had begun running with him, although she never set lofty goals.

"His first full marathon was my first half-marathon," she said. "I thought, 'I'll never do a full marathon.'"

But she caught the running bug, too, and soon set her sights on completing a 26.2-miler.

While they were fit to start, both have enjoyed benefits of running. Jenny is down about 15 pounds, and Tim noticed his belly fat had disappeared. Better yet, his tendency toward high cholesterol has disappeared.

They are busy parents of three - Maddie, 22, just graduated from West Virginia University and last year completed a half-marathon with her parents. Sydney is 13 and runs cross-country for John Adams Middle School where Jenny will coach in the fall. Jackson is 8 and already showing promise in 5K races.

Jenny teaches at Overbrook Elementary School and Tim is a lawyer, so they run in the evenings during the week, usually deciding their distance when they head out the door. Sometimes they'll park downtown, head out on separate courses and then meet back at the car. Other times they run together.

"It's not set at all," Tim said of their running schedule. On weekends, they do a longer run, from 10 to 15 miles. Sometimes they head to the nearby track at George Washington High School and do sprint work. They never run on a treadmill.

Tim said he believes more runners are capable of distance. He promises it gets easier.

"It is hard to get past that 2- to 3-mile mark. Most people don't get past that," he said. Many days it takes him that long to warm up and get in the groove of running.

The spent feeling may come and go during a long run, he said. And an experienced runner knows how to ride that out.

As he did the 50K race this past year, Tim had ups and downs.

"But at the end, I felt great. If you'd said, 'Keep going,' I would have felt fine to do that," he said.

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