

The Post Crescent  
Kathy Jankowski, PaceSetters Running Organization President  
By Gloria West  
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We may not be seeing a woman president this year, although we do know women can “run” the world. At least I know of one woman who runs throughout the country and who runs the world of running in our community. She is an effective leader, a tireless leader and a leader with a lot of spunk. She is Kathy Jankowski, president of the PaceSetters Running Organization. Unlike, Hilary Clinton, who had 4 years to become a president, Kathy has had to do little convincing or fighting for the Pacesetter members to re elect her for as their president of 4 years. They have graciously and unanimously sworn her into this office presidency.

Why so many years? And how so? Sandy Thein, long time member and board member of the PaceSetters explains, “Kathy is so professional and this carries through from her job to how she runs the meetings and how she organizes. It is easy and comfortable to work with her so people just naturally follow. Chad Gruett, another board member quickly added, “I’ve gotten to know Kathy pretty well in my five years with the club and my two years on the board. I can’t say enough good things about her. She does a wonderful job promoting the club and its goals of getting the Fox Cities community more active and encouraging better health. More importantly, she’s just a great person. She goes out of her way to do nice things for other people and to make all of our members feel welcome.

Kathy like many of us women in our 40’s and 50’s came from the professional school of motherhood. She started running in 1985 as a mother with 3 young sons and wanting to get in shape. Now a career in banking, 2 grandchildren later, Kathy has completed 16 marathons, including Fox Cities six times, Boston, New York and Chicago.

Kathy qualified this past May to run Boston again in 2009.

This is the second time she has done so. I would say Kathy is really “into it... her passion flows.” It is sometimes difficult to maintain such a lofty fitness level for yourself along with nurturing others as the club president to do the same for themselves. It can consume your life. I equate it to making donuts all day at a donut shop and then going home to eat them. It would take some serious leg grinding to see myself qualifying for the Boston Marathon these days. All I have been qualifying for lately is a few extra discount coupons at Office Max and JC Pennys. I admire her balancing a career in banking, achieving her running goals like the Boston Marathon and leading an organization that is very dynamic in this community.

Why is she able to take on this role so well? It is obvious she not only likes to organize but simply likes and understands people. Kathy subtly admits, “Getting involved with the PaceSetters has given me the camaraderie and support from a group of people who share the same desire to be healthy and active.

Here is the line up of just some of the projects Kathy has been instrumental in leading and organizing:

- PaceSetters is hosting 4 run/walk events and providing major volunteer support for 4 others, including; Run For Home 5K, Sole Burner 5K, Mom’s 2 Mile, Brett Younger Memorial, PaceSetters XC 5K, Cheesehead Half Marathon & 5K, Freaky 5K, and St. Joe’s Food Pantry 5K.

- In addition to these events, PaceSetters are volunteering hundreds of hours to such events as Community First Fox Cities Marathon Festival of Races, Cellcom Green Bay Marathon,
- High Cliff Triathlon, Neenah Youth Runs, and the Appleton Jingle Bell Run.
- PaceSetters will host and provide leadership for numerous training events, including: Running 101 classes for beginning runners; weekend training runs in Appleton, Oshkosh, Neenah-Menasha; weekly evening hill training and track workouts; weekly marathon training runs designed to help first-time marathoners succeed; and dedicated Saturday walking workouts.
- PaceSetters is hosting monthly social and educational meetings throughout the year with a variety of sports oriented health professionals.
- The PaceSetters monthly newsletter
- “Experience the Sport of Life”

Singlehandedly, she will also head up the Pace Teams from 3:30 to 5 hour for the upcoming Community First Fox Cities Marathon. That weekend Kathy will also be in charge of chip scanning and staffing the information booth.

Now if that doesn't tire you out just reading about it, imagine the Office of this Presidency is like for Kathy. The job is often thankless, no pay, lots of responsibility, countless hours of dedicated service, which in the end is very rewarding for Kathy, knowing she might be contributing something to the health and fitness of others.

Her community mindedness is most obvious. When I asked why she is so involved with the club and why for so many years, her answer was clear “The PaceSetters Club is making a difference in our community becoming fit.” That is a noble goal; to influence an entire community through action. Kathy does not do it for pay, nor prestige. She just knows where she is going. She doesn't need a course map to finish a marathon mission, nor to professionally lead the PaceSetters. She knows her direction and she is on course.