

Race Report

62nd Annual Heart of America Marathon and 2nd Annual Fun Team Relay

Labor Day – Sept 7th, 2021

By Kathy Lee with contributions from Joe Duncan

The 62nd Annual Heart of America Marathon and 2nd Annual Fun Team Relay is in the books as the 2nd oldest continuously running in-person marathon in the U.S.! We thank our runners, many who have run HOA many times, our volunteers and our sponsors for making this possible.

Speaking of sponsors . . . For the first time ever, HOA had a presenting sponsor! We were thrilled that **Boone Health** came alongside us to sponsor us monetarily, with medical support, featuring our medical director, Dr. Eric Bettis, and with the mobile Boone Health Unit at the Finish Line. This made a huge difference in the amount of services and support we could provide! Thank you, Boone Health! Another huge shout out to our first ever media sponsor – Clear 99! They ran ads and also brought the Clear 99 van to the Finish Line! Shelter Insurance has been a faithful partner for many years now, and Tom Moore, DDS, Orthodontics is not only a marathoner, a relay team member, but also a sponsor! Thank you!

We continue to be grateful to The Mid-Missouri Fisher House. Their volunteers do so much work for HOA and they are always a joy to be around.

With a go ahead for our traditional mass start and clearance to have spectators at the start and finish areas we were more than ready for our traditional home town send offs and welcomes!

For the 3rd year in a row we are very grateful to our host and venue sponsor the Boone County History and Culture Center! History and HOA go hand and hand and we always love a good finish by the Easley Store!

Each year brings history, and it also brings many new things. Columbia and Boone County are growing communities and they've developed an affinity for roundabouts. This year a new roundabout went in right on the course – at Route K and Old Plank. The intersection was closed throughout the summer and opened just 3 weeks before race day. This necessitated a re-certification of the course at the final hour. We were fortunate to have an excellent certifier, Steve Riley, from Lawrence, Kansas (Shhh! Don't tell anyone he's from KU territory) come over, do all the hard work and handle the recert for us. While he was at it we asked him to make a couple of other changes for us as well – including circling Phillips Lake rather than just doing an out and back. We figured that would make HOA easy. Funny . . . people still thought it was hard. Well, we tried. Hard or not, exceptional performances ruled the day for the 2021 HOA!

The top 3 Female Winners were, **Oksana Loginova** of Columbia, MO in 3:40:48, Loginova in her 5th. at 3:40:49 was only 38 seconds off her PB of 2019. At age 47 she is 2nd at that age. **Rebecca Thompson** of Columbia in 3:41:52, and **Nicole Murphy** of Columbia, MO in 3:51:14.

The top 3 Male Winners were, **Gregory Blomquist**, Columbia MO, in 2:56:28, This was Blomquist's third HOA, 1st 40+ in both 2019 & '20 and now a win. He now ranks 6th, at age 43. **Sankalp Shiva**, of Denton, TX in 3:05:09 and **Thomas Warner**, of Gerald, MO in 3:08:33.

The top 3 Masters Female Winners were, **Mary Ellen Bradshaw** (also completing her 17th consecutive HOA) of Columbia, MO in 4:08:28, **Katherine Couturier** of Columbia in 4:16:18, and **Haley Schwarz** of Columbia, MO in 4:16:50.

The top 3 Masters Male Winners were, **Takashi Murashita** of Columbia, MO in 3:09:53, **Jaume Padilla** of Columbia, MO in 3:26:59, and **Andy Emerson** in 3:28:36. Andy also completed his 18th consecutive HOA!

A couple of records to note!

Becky Bond, Columbia got the female age 57 record with her 4:35:05 and **Cathy Spencer** now has the female age 70 record, in fact she is the only 70-year-old woman to finish HOA. She is from Wichita, Kansas.

We had some marathoners from last year return this year with teammates to compete in the relay! That was a lot of fun! **Sadie Smith**, last year's winning female marathoner, returned with a team called "Chafing the Dream" to compete against another team which included her husband, **Jim Smith**, called the "Prancing Ponies"! Rumor was there was some smack talk prior to the race, but in the end it was the Prancing Ponies who edged out Chafing the Dream 3:19:27 to 3:20:56. We also had returning marathoners **Tom Moore** and **Jay Schroeder** bringing two teammates along to form the Bruinators Team. Tom is a sponsor and supporter of HOA and Jay is the son of the first winner of HOA, Joe Schroeder, back in 1960!

The fight for the finish between relay teams was intense. In the end, only seconds separated the 1st and 2nd place teams. Coming in first was The Fantastic Four of Columbia, MO with teammates, **Tom May, Katie Hauser, Dan Edidin** and **Laura Hillard** with a time of 2:49:27. Right on their heels came The Dad Bod Squad of Columbia with teammates, **Chris Lunn, Ryan Hauser, Kermit Summerall**, and **Brian Cooksey**. 3rd place awards went to Born To Run from Zumbrota, MN with teammates, **Erik Stone** and **Kevin Stone**.

While the heart of Heart stays the same course-wise, there were a few changes in 2021. Runners turned south from the History Center parking lot and ran along Ponderosa Rd to the first roundabout. They rounded the roundabout and then ran back past the History Center. This proved to be a big hit as spectators could watch them come back past. The next change was no longer running that dark stretch along Woodhaven. The road there had become too rocky and was deemed unsafe. The new roundabout at Rt K and Old Plank didn't affect things too much as it turned out, but happily it did lead to the idea of going all the way around Phillips Lake instead of the out and back. Next year, the City is to build a small footbridge over the spillway. Eventually, those trees planted will grow and provide some shade. The finish line was moved just a little way further down the trail at the History Center to compensate for the changes made earlier in the course.

We were thrilled to have the MU ROTC back with us this year to help start things off by presenting the colors. An added treat was to having Miss Christina Cox, the reigning Miss Boone County Teen Queen sing the National Anthem during a moving opening ceremony. Boone Health CEO Troy Greer spoke to the runners, highlighting the shared history and significance Boone Health has with HOA, and Kenton Gewecke, Chief Meteorologist for KOMU 8 served as our MC!

The weather was kind to HOA runners this year with starting temperatures in the low 60s and the highs only in the mid-80s at the end of the race. It must help having a meteorologist as your announcer!

Thom Allen, treasurer of the Columbia Track Club, fired the starting gun promptly at 0600 and the runners were off!

Relay transition points with aid stations were sponsored this year by **Veterans United, Cooper's Landing** and **Pierpont General Store**.

As always, we depend so much on our volunteers, sponsors and supporters.

Average Joe Award - New this year was the Average Joe Award named in honor of long-time HOA race director **Joe Duncan**. Joe was race director of HOA for 47 years and currently holds the position of 3rd longest serving race director in the U.S.

The Average Joe Award is given to the runner who comes closest to the average time for the entire field of marathoners, as Joe has always been an average runner! We will note, however, there is nothing average about Joe Duncan, the man!

This year the award went to **Christopher Johnson** of Denton, TX. He didn't win a trophy, plaque, or shoes . . . Christopher won an old well used worker's metal lunchbox, filled with an odd variety of average items – socks, toothbrush, batteries and, a crumpled twenty-dollar bill. One special item of note in the lunchbox was a hand-crafted glass heart made specifically for this award by local HOA veteran, Dan Heaviland.

Schulte Award – The Schulte Award is awarded to the runners M/F who most improves his/her time from a previous personal best of under 5:00. Dave Schulte was a charter member of the Columbia Track Club and its first Secretary-Treasurer. **Sankalp Shiva** of Denton, TX was the Schulte Award winner with his 3:05:03 (2nd Place overall finish) improving his time 27% over his 2020 time of 4:15:56. We hope the Denton, TX runners had some extra room in their suitcase to pack home their awards!

Schroeder Award – This award goes to the runner who finishes first from the field of first-time marathoners. This year's male Schroeder Award winner was **Thomas Warner** of Gerald, MO bringing in a 3:08:33. Katherine Couturier, of Columbia, MO was the female winner with 4:16:36. The Schroeder Award is named after **Joe Schroeder**, the winner of the first HOA in 1960.

The Ozark Mountain Biscuit Truck, Calvin Street Band, CMC Therapeutic Massage, Family First Chiropractic and Wildy's World were all a part of the Finish Line Festivities along with traditional Shakespeare's pizza for runners and volunteers. Medals were handed out by Boone County Commissioners Janet Thompson and Justin Aldred.

A happy and successful 62nd HOA and 2nd Relay is in the books. Many things change over time, but the heart of this race stays the same.