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Enter this year's Online Essay Contest today.

Given all of the COVID-19 craziness, we need to think and write about Good Things, like your favorite story (limit 200 words) about your participation in the Manchester Road Race! Please enter your essay at ManchesterRoadRace.com. Deadline is Wednesday, November 25. This contest is sponsored exclusively by **Sports Medicine & Orthopedic Surgery**. Please thank them for giving us an opportunity to focus not on what we *don't* have, but on what we *DO* have!

 **Sports Medicine & Orthopedic Surgery, P.C.**
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 The Manchester Road Race

Our 2020 Essay Contest Winner is Paul Cincotta from Vernon, CT!

There is much to be grateful for. The last time I ran the Manchester Road Race was in 2016. It was a struggle, but I did finish. I had turned 50 a few months before. In March of 2017, I had a heart attack. A couple of stents were required to open a blockage in the widow-maker. A guy who was accustomed to working two jobs was no longer allowed to shovel snow. Attending cardiac rehab at Rockville General Hospital allowed me to work my way back to health. I was lucky. Now we can fast forward to this year. When the pandemic shut things down, I lost balance. Working long hours at home, I started to make too many bad food choices and stopped most physical activity other than the occasional walk. My blood pressure was headed in the wrong direction and I felt exhausted and stressed. I decided to step up my efforts to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Part of that goal was to participate in this year's race. I am grateful for the opportunity to support our community by participating in the 2020 Manchester Road Race and make it a part of my comeback plan. Thank you!

--Paul Cincotta, Vernon CT (has run in the Race four years)

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**We received contest entries from coast-to-coast,
from Oregon to Massachusetts. Here are the other
fascinating entries, in alphabetical order by last name.
Thanks to all who entered!**



I tell myself “This is Thanksgiving in Manchester” as I toe the line. No alumni warmups, group pictures, or party at the Anderson's in 2020, but I have memories. I run past Fani’s, where Dad and I would go after our practice MRR runs in the fall, using the bank clock as my watch. As I turn onto Highland, I can usually pick out the unmistakable stride of Ryan running in his Clash T-shirt. I pass the Hungry Tiger, where I might catch a glimpse of Frank, who can always pick me out of the crowd. The hill never gets easier--can I catch Dan? Not this year. A long green line of MRC jerseys; I should have gotten the latest one from Pat. I am relieved to make the turn onto Porter and hear Coach Redmond. As we bottom out, I hear the bands, rock, polka, and pipes. Mom and Dad are always cheering where I need them, at the green. As I turn onto Main, I always use the mirror on the left to see if anyone is close behind. So much of my past, I run by on this lap: music lessons, driving school, nursery school, the nature center, the Mary Cheney library. I may live 3,000 miles away now, but I am blessed to call this home. I am thankful I made it back.

–Nicholas AuYeung, Corvallis, OR (has run the Race 26 years)



2020 will be my 39th consecutive running of the Manchester Road Race. While running the 2016 Manchester Road Race, I was about 3-1/2 miles into the race, when I was hit from behind and tripped up by a runner who was not paying attention to where he was going. We both ended up on the ground. After apologizing profusely, he continued on. In addition to a scrape on my left hand and left knee, and bruised ribs, I had sprained my right hamstring and could not extend my right leg enough to walk. I ended up sitting and watching the runners go by. My appreciation to a local policeman who made sure I was okay, and a group of bystanders who gave me a chair, a blanket, a drink of water, and a ride to my car. I was on crutches for several days. Seventeen days later, I parked at the finish line and limped to where the injury had occurred. I then turned around and finished the race, crossing the finish line in just over 17 days and 4 hours. Needless to say, it was a memorable race.

--Don DiGenova, Manchester CT (has run the Race 39 years)

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Having lived on the Manchester Road Race route for 30 years has given me quite a few wonderful memories. In my first year, I heard a SHUSH! I looked out my window to see a sea of people running in the light snow. In my second year, as I stood out waiting for the race to begin, a runner ran by in a white bodysuit. I took a photo of her, not knowing who she was. Later, I found out it was the world-class runner Mary Decker Slaney. I have seen outrageous costumes galore, stood out in all kinds of weather to support and greet friends. One year when I walked the race, I was amazed at how many people are out cheering on the participants. But my greatest memory is a little girl, no more than 4 or 5 years old, near the corner of Potter and Autumn Streets standing there doing a HIGH FIVE. Most people ran by her. I crossed over and gave her a high five. I knew it made her smile and hope it left a good memory with her. To me, it is a cherished memory!

–Mark Guertin, Manchester CT (has run in the Race one year)



Did I ever tell you about the time my son came home from the Race in a police car? Buckle your seat belt, here we go. Thanksgiving Day was sunny and mild, perfect conditions for my nine year old son's first Road Race. Patrick was feisty, independent and near-sighted. Responsibilities kept me from watching him race; nevertheless, I wanted him to have a positive, memorable experience. His father (no longer in the home) drove him to the race. I assumed they would run together and ride home together. Silly me, I was in for a surprise! While I was simultaneously tending to the turkey and my elderly grandmother, the Manchester Police Department phoned to say they "had" my son. Shortly after I hung up, a patrol car appeared, thankfully without lights and sirens, and discharged its passenger. Patrick strolled up the walk. "I couldn't find Lenox Pharmacy or Dad," he said nonchalantly. Apparently, the father-son post-race plan was to meet at Lenox's; without glasses, the pharmacy letters were a blur to Patrick as was his dad's car. Thankfully, an alert officer spotted him squinting on the street and gave him a ride. Police involvement or not, I was thrilled he completed the course. Now 36, Patrick has been faithfully running the race ever since. And he wears his glasses so he can recognize his family and town landmarks when he is through.

–Kathryn Haserick, Tolland CT (has run in the Race three years)

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On Thanksgiving, I'm grateful for supporting Muscular Dystrophy research and other local charities when I register; What happens before the gun. God Bless America! I love hearing the national anthem and seeing a military flyover before the race begins; Julia Chase, who took her spot on the starting line nearly 60 years ago, and made Manchester a truly equal opportunity event; 4.748 miles. With New England's unpredictable weather, that distance is just about right; my father, who won a bet by running Manchester more than 45 years ago, and keeps my family running; my mother, who cheers us on rain or shine, and makes THE BEST tailgate for our family to celebrate another year of running together; Safety Man, the Blues Brothers, and those badass dudes who run painted red, white, and blue, and carry the American flag; the end of Highland Avenue's hills. What a boost turning the corner onto Porter Street, and letting loose downhill; The band that plays "Gonna Fly Now," the cowbells and the high fives that power runners through; this 84-year tradition that I am proud to carry on with my own family; the finish line. I will never take one for granted again.

–Gwenn Higgins, Norwell MA (has run in the Race 27 years)



Last year was the first time I was in the Manchester Road Race. My time was 50:55, not the best, but my knee was bothering me that day. By the time I got home, my knee was swollen, hot and extremely painful. I could not put any weight on it. I ended up calling an ambulance. Fast forward one year, physical therapy left my knee better than ever! I was able to improve my time this year, at 44:57. Not bad for a vegan runner, someone who never ran as a kid. I lost 150 pounds 15 years ago and kept it off as a vegan athlete. I feel this lifestyle has served me well, giving me lots of energy and keeping my weight off. Although we couldn't run together in Manchester, I thought it was important to exercise when most are planning their Thanksgiving meals. Last year, I wore a sign that said "Happy No Turkey Day" and "Go Vegan". This year, although I couldn't wear the same sign, I wanted to participate anyway. I'm glad I did... my race times keep improving!

--Richard Hubbard, Torrington CT (has run in the Race two years)

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The Manchester Road Race has been a lifetime experience. As a kid growing up in town in the 1970's, we would ride our bikes to the race on Thanksgiving morning and watch from the corner of Center and Main. The number of runners and spectators was much smaller then. It seemed that Amby Burfoot pulled the crowd behind him. As a teen, we had moved out of town, but I would drive over to see the race, as by then, it became a tradition. In the college years, the race became a reunion of sorts and we would meet at the Hungry Tiger and root for the runners out front. The crowd will spill out onto the front walkway for an annual photo, which Photos line the walls inside. Finally, I decided to run the race instead of watching it. Being a non-runner at the time, I trained for four months prior. It was an exhilarating experience to actually be in the race and have been coming back to run every year since. Much like a tour of Manchester, the changes along the route are subtle. Some things remain the same, others stand out. Carry Nations. Carter Chevrolet. The State Theater. Marlowe's. I've run many other races including the New York City Marathon, but the Manchester Road Race still stands as a truly unique experience above all. It is a race that is what you make it to be. Serious, fun, competitive, festive, casual; you decide.

--Michael LeBlanc, South Windsor CT (has run in the Race 26 years)



When Bill lined up to run his first Manchester Road Race on Thanksgiving morning 1982, he wasn't thinking beyond completing 4.748 miles, but he loved the experience and continued to come back. Four years later, he introduced me to the MRR, and I began running with him every Thanksgiving. In 1998, I became pregnant, the only downside of which was that on Thanksgiving morning I was not among the thousands of runners lined up on Main Street. So, seven months pregnant with twins, I missed what would have been my 13th consecutive race. Our daughters, Molly and Rebecca, began their Manchester experience watching with family, but in 2007, at the age of eight, they ran alongside me. Together, we have continued this tradition, sharing the experience with family and friends throughout the years. Just last Thanksgiving, Rebecca came home from college with pneumonia and had to miss what would have been her 13th consecutive race; her sadness alleviated just a little by this distinction shared with her mom. Now as we prepare for MRR 2020, these two missed years take on their own significance as together the four of us will complete a total of exactly 100 Manchester Road Races.

--Margot LaPoint, Marlborough CT (has run in the Race 33 years)

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I began my journey with MRR as I started to run in my mid-forties. Running my first MRR, I was so overwhelmed by the stories of the runners of this race, the costumes, the bands and the joyous crowd of people lining the streets with their own stories and history of watching this magical spectacle of celebration. Endless love. My second year running MRR was magical. My four daughters surprised me by registering, as I could not stop talking about my experience of the MRR from the prior year. They all dressed as Charlies Angels. Yes, I'm Charlie, and we had bid numbers 14001, 14002, 14003, 14004 and 14005. It was so wonderful to gather for Thanksgiving morning and run the race as a family. I smile every time I look at that picture in my office. The next year, my wife ran her first MRR after finishing a year of chemo and surviving cancer. And she did not train, lol. Pure guts and love of family. From there, their stories grew from that race and they shared with their friends and others. The family grew and more memories grew from MRR. Family is forever. Cherish it. It is the greatest treasure and where the story begins. Thank you MRR for being there so many years. We are just one family story. Imagine all the others? MRR, you are the gift of life. Thank You from Charlie's Angels.

--Charles Markunas, Vernon CT (has run in the Race 10 years)



The Ultimate Goal. *The setup:* Thanksgiving has long been a favorite holiday, and being in Manchester on Main Street at 10 am is a big part of that. Jim Balcome welcoming one and all to "Thanksgiving in Manchester." Counting down the clock as runners of all ages crowd in. The playing of the National Anthem, many bursting with joy inside at the remarkable scene. *The race:* I ran this year's race as if I were running with a purpose, determined and excited while taking in the wonderful sights and sounds of the 4.748 mile route. *Sights:* The Hungry Tiger overflowing with revelers. Highland Park Market; something certainly smells great! Heartbreak (a/k/a shillelagh) Hill; just a bit more and I can coast down the other side! *Sounds:* Bagpipes: giving me goosebumps, always seeming to embolden my stride whenever I hear them. *Cheering:* local residents cheering us on from their front yards. *Bands:* Is that Hot Head Slater rocking out in someone's driveway? *The payoff:* As I round the corner back onto Main Street I can almost taste it. No, not the finish line, but the ultimate goal - The Army-Navy Club, of course!

--Dan O'Brien, Windsor CT (has run in the Race 13 years)

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As I started the virtual race, I ran alone on the MRR course on Sunday. 41 years have flown by since I had ran my first MRR. Five thousand runners that year, and I crossed the finish line and the Main Street coordinator grabbed my left arm in a steel vice grip and told me "Stand Still!" So, I stood still while a young lady on the stool manually recorded my number/name. After that race, the workers collected the tear-off tags to record the runners, and then later years, chip timing on the sneaker arrived with Jim Balcome proclaiming that the chip could also be an ornament on a runner's Christmas tree. And now it's bib timing. The MRR has stayed with the technology, but the spirit of the race is ever present as I virtually ran this year's edition. I am waiting to line up and hear next year, "This is Thanksgiving Day in Manchester!"

--Rick Webster, Broad Brook CT (has run in the Race 41 years)



**Many thanks to Sports Medicine & Orthopedic Surgery
(SportsMedCT.com) for their sponsorship of this year's Essay Contest!**

