

This 90-Year-Old Won't Stop Running

(Story courtesy of writer Katelyn Mae Petrin at St. Louis Magazine)

Dottie Gray runs a 5K almost every weekend, even though she lives in a retirement home. “When I was getting up to 90, I thought, 'Well, I'll race until I'm 90.'" That didn't happen: Gray turns 91 in June and she is still running strong.

“Every year, it takes me a little longer to do it," she says. "But if I didn't do it every week, I feel like I'd either quit or get too slow."

Gray's running habit began late in life, when she was 54 years old. Up until that point, she had played a little tennis between watching her six kids. But she decided to join her friends on a two-mile run in Kirkwood, Missouri, during the Greentree Festival.

She practiced, finished the race, and went home—only to get a call. “Dottie, you've gotta come back!" the voice on the other line exclaimed. "You won in your age group!"

Since then, she estimates that she's won thousands of plaques, medals, and trophies. There are so many, she rents a storage unit to hold all of them. Over the past few decades, Gray has participated in the St. Louis Senior Olympics and the Huntsman World Senior Games (where she set several world records). She's also run three dozen half marathons and five full marathons.

She started her marathon adventure in St. Louis with a four-hour, 35-minute time, but wasn't happy with that—so she ran it again the following year and dropped 20 minutes. After that, she ran marathons in Chicago and New York and, at 71, completed the Boston Marathon centennial run. Her favorite run was the Beach to Beacon 10K, a race that travels along the coast of Maine, starting at a beach and taking runners to a lighthouse.

“For me, it's easy to run," she says. “But I'm real happy when a 5K is over, when you see the finish line.”