

Dennis Shenk
2011 St. Luke's Running Star

As a younger child I was active and healthy and throughout school. For some reason once out of school is when things unknowingly got out of control. Around the age of 18 I thought I could take on the world and thought I knew it all. I lived in a single-room housing situation. My work ethic was weak, which led to standing in lines for a few bags of groceries at churches or eating a meal at a shelter.

I learned how to make it through with very little and a low paying job. I was in a relationship and was blessed with a daughter, but the relationship ended. With all that was going on, it was tough to concentrate on me. I let my health slip by unnoticed.

Around the age of 26 I had gotten back in touch with my high school sweetheart Kristen and we restarted a relationship. Kristen had two children through a previous relationship so in all we had three children. Kristen and I then had a child together in 2003 and we now are proud parents of four beautiful little girls. Once again years are flying by without noticing my health issues.

In 2003 I suffered a broken ankle at my job. I was in a wheelchair for a few months and had to be rehabilitated via therapy. I experienced my major weight issues. When I started walking again I saw pictures of myself and realized it was time to change. Years had gone by until my wife started to feel bad about herself and her weight. This was around the beginning of 2010. I saw a friend of mine from high school on Facebook talking about running the NYC marathon. My wife and I went to see her. To make a long story short, my wife had come back from NYC and started running like Forest Gump. She has so far lost 55 pounds since around beginning of 2010.

I decided to stand behind my wife's journey. And to be around for my four girls I made the decision to change, too. This was around June 2010 and I've been going non-stop since. When I started my journey I weighed in at 347 pounds. I changed my food choices and I made an effort to stay active. I turned my treadmill walking into small jogs. I now run on my treadmill and I'm down to around 275-280 pounds.

My children make healthy choices and eating decisions and wife is still going strong. I have gone from 48-50 jeans to 38's, 4xl-5xl shirts to 2xl's. I shower different, dress different, move different, perform my job differently and just plain live differently because of running.

I'm now 33 years old and my children are ages 12, 12, 11 and 7. I have a new lease on

life and there is no turning back. I need to be here for my children and family. I currently am a commercial driver and making a decent living. Being out 2 nights a week it is very hard to make good decisions but it's easy to me now. I stay away from truck stop food.

I ran my first 5k at the Jingle Bell Run in December and did it non-stop in 36:20. 650 out of 998. I would not allow myself to be the "fat" guy walking so I tortured myself and stayed running. I know I inspired someone that day! The St Luke's 5k race is the first race I signed up for. Well my wife signed me up for and then told me forcing me into it. Even though I did one 5k this will be my first 5k mentally. I am still a heavy 275-280 pounds but I move, I run, I never quit. The turtle beats the hare!