

Prayer eases path for sister in standings

One of the names in the 65-69 women's age group of The Buffalo News' Runner of the Year standings tends to jump out.

That's because there aren't any other runs in the listings.

Sister Gerry Murray of Lackawanna is that runner. No, she doesn't go down the roads so quickly that she could be nicknamed "The Flying Nun," but she hits the streets often enough to put many of Western New York's runners to shame.

"I run about five days a week," said Murray, a member of the Sisters of Mercy. "Usually I go between 3 and 5 miles per day. Sometimes on weekends I do 6 miles. I run about 20 to 25 miles per week."

What's more, she's been keeping that sort of running schedule for a long time. She squeezes in her runs around her position as a part-time chaplain at Mercy Hospital's skilled nursing facility; she also does home visits to the elderly for St. Anthony's of Lackawanna.

"I've been running for about 28 years," she said. "Two different things got me started. I lived with a sister who wanted to jog. I did it with her. I kept it up and she didn't. I started out going too far, but I learned to pace myself."

"I also worked with adults as a speech therapist at United Cerebral Palsy. After seeing people go through life without having the ability to do things for themselves, I thought I'd use the abilities I did have. It's a form of gratitude."

"So many people can't even talk, let alone run."

While Murray hasn't been running for her entire life, she often has been involved in some sort of athletics.

"I went to St. Ambrose's grade school [in Buffalo]. I was in the relays and dashes," she said. "I was on the baseball team. I did like sports then, and I played basketball at Mount Mercy Academy. But I never thought I'd get into an endurance sport."

Murray started running in Buffalo in



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John Hickey/Buffalo News

1978. She and three other members of Sisters of Mercy moved to Pochontas, Va., near the West Virginia border. She spent two stints there totaling 14 years, where she ran up and down the Appalachian Mountains.

"I did the marathon once, in 1985 in Charleston, W. Va.," she said. "There were only 78 runners in the race, and only seven of those were women. I was third. I was surprised to get a

extra mile when she's tired. "I offer the miles for different people, and I know a lot of them because I'm with the sick and the dying," she said. "I ask to help the sick and for peace for those near death. I'm usually thinking of a prayer for someone."

Running shorts

The new book, "26.2," by Kathrine Switzer and Roger Robinson, has something of a surprise in it for area readers. There are 26.2 chapters in the book, and one of them is dedicated to prizes. The finishers' medals and bibs from the old Ford Buffalo Marathon and the Nisсан Buffalo Marathon will quickly be noticed by area readers.

The reason is that the photos from the chapter are taken from the personal collection of Les Potapczyk, a runner from Niagara Falls, Ont.

"26.2" is a nice look at the marathon, with interesting text mixed in with several great photographs from around the world. If you are looking for a gift for someone who just completed a marathon, this might be worth a look.

The view during Thursday's Tim Frank Memorial Canal Fest 4 Miller will look a little different this year. The race will be held on the north side of the barge canal instead of the south side. It starts at the foot of the Delaware Street Bridge at Sweeney and Main streets in North Tonawanda.

Race schedule

- St. John Vianney's Kickoff Run, 5K, Michael Road, Southwestern Blvd., Orchard Park, 6:30 p.m. Thursday, 674-9133.
- Tim Frank Memorial Canal Fest 4 Miller, 7 Broad St., City of Tonawanda, 7 p.m. on Thursday, 694-6388.
- Crabapple 5K Run, Stiglmeier Park, Cheektowaga, 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, 897-7207, ext. 18.

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