

# Chicago Marathoner Continues Running for Alzheimer's

One thing motivates Chuck Aron, age 69, to keep running. And it's not what you may think.

The Chicago resident and criminal defense attorney doesn't necessarily run to lose weight or keep his heart healthy. While they're beneficial side effects, Aron runs for a different reason: to fight Alzheimer's disease.

"I'll keep doing it until either I can't run anymore or there's no more Alzheimer's," he says.

In 2004, Aron ran the Chicago Marathon in the name of the Alzheimer's Association, raising \$10,722.80. But he hasn't been able to do it all on his own. Weiss sports medicine specialists have stood by Aron through the ups and downs of long-distance running over long periods of time.

The high-impact exercise can take a toll on joints, from heels to knees—as Aron experienced in 2010.

His knee began bothering him, so he set up an appointment with Weiss Sports Medicine Specialist Danielle Bass, M.D.

"The fact that she was a former athlete is what attracted me. I figured we could speak the same language, and we did," Aron says.

Dr. Bass recommended that he stop running for 30 days. Aron went silent.

"You're not going to do that, are you?" Dr. Bass asked.

Instead, they compromised on what Aron

could do—some running, mixed with walking, resting and plenty of physical therapy.

Dr. Bass continued to see Aron through knee surgery in late 2011 with Weiss Orthopedic Surgeon Craig Westin, M.D., and later, treatment for his shoulder. Dr. Westin, who also treats professional and Olympic athletes, admired Aron's determination. "I've been amazed by Chuck's resilience as an athlete," he says. "Just 80 days after surgery, he was back running a half marathon."

Clearly not much could keep Aron from running and raising money for the Alzheimer's Association. In 2014, Aron ran 1,200 miles—more than 220 hours.

Back in 2004, Aron ran the Chicago Marathon after a 25-year hiatus because he was turning 58—the same age his brother-in-law, Paul, was when he passed away of early-onset Alzheimer's.

"I saw what Alzheimer's did to my brother-in-law, who was one of the smartest guys I ever knew. He was also the brother I never had," Aron says. "That year, I trained myself for the marathon. I was just out there running, running, running, running."

During those runs, he would get frustrated with the Chicago Area Runners Association (CARA) runners clogging the lakefront path. Aron (a CARA member himself) complained to his program director.

"If you can keep people running in twos, why don't you become a group leader?" the director suggested.

So that's what Aron did. Today, he primarily trains first-time runners. They spend early mornings along the lakefront, and Aron keeps



them motivated through teasing and developing individual programs.

"They treat me like I'm the goofy uncle at Thanksgiving, but with love and affection," Aron says.

The runners serve as a great supportive system for each other and for Aron. And when a runner is hurting, Aron refers him or her to Dr. Bass—a testament to his experience at Weiss.

In August 2014, Aron saw Dr. Bass again for tibial tendonitis—inflammation of the area around the ankles. Together, they worked out a schedule of walking, biking, and physical therapy. Aron eventually built up to a run/walk, which enabled him to compete in the Chicago Marathon.

And while Dr. Bass helps keep Aron moving physically, his brother-in-law motivates him mentally.

"When I'm feeling really beat down during a race, I think about Paul and remember his saying: 'Try and relax,'" Aron says.

Aron has run the Chicago Marathon 11 times since 2004, raising \$115,666 for the Alzheimer's Association.

For more information on how to support Aron's fundraising for the Alzheimer's Association, email him at [chuckruns@earthlink.net](mailto:chuckruns@earthlink.net).



Craig Westin, M.D.



Danielle Bass, M.D.