

Beaches Brunch to Beaches Bunch

In less than five years, the Beaches Running Club has grown from a rag-tag gang of runchers to one of the biggest clubs in Toronto.

By Dianne Kapral

A simple post-run brunch in 2009 was all it took to form one of Toronto’s largest running clubs. Local runners Dave and Anita Emilio, Duff McLaren, and Nir and Julie Meltzer made a decision that day to “put a name to this group of regular running mates,” says club president Dave Emilio.

For those with more of a competitive streak, Emilio says “the thought of bringing in a paid coach to take us to the next level has been, and continues to be discussed.” In 2014, the BRC earned the Greater Toronto Area club championship title at the Oasis Zoo Run 10K Run, a result of a cohesive team who performed well. The club will be out again in full force to defend its title in 2015, and is also gathering a team to compete at cross-country races this fall.

In 2013, the Boston Marathon bombing showed the cohesiveness of the club in new ways. The BRC had 20 members racing and the tragedy hit hard. That day “showed that a strong, tight-knit group can become even stronger. My phone was buzzing the whole



TORONTO BEACHES RUNNERS CLUB
TORONTO, ONTARIO



Club Stats	
MEMBERS	233
FEES	Free with some volunteer commitment to races and socials
WEBSITE	beachesrunners.com

The Toronto Beaches Runners Club brought the local “running community together as a unit, as opposed to the randomness of running out of a retail outlet and making last minute plans,” he says.

The demand was clear as the club now has 233 members with about 40 regulars coming out for the club’s two regular weekly runs out of the Beaches Running Room on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings. The club also hosts a third weekly run on Saturday mornings from the local Starbucks. The Leslie Spit, one of the club’s favourite running spots, sees a lot of the action, with a bi-monthly out-and-back 10K run to the lighthouse.

“The whole Toronto running scene rocks,” says Emilio, “but the Beaches just happens to encapsulate everything a runner needs in one area – hills, off-road trails not too far away, and access to many multi-purpose paths for running traffic-free.”

The Beaches also offers “a plethora of options for post-run ‘refreshments,’” says Emilio. The BRC prides itself on being a social running club whose members share a passion not only for running, but also post-run pints, potluck parties, brunches and pub nights. “Our plan for the fall of this year is our first BRC Black Tie Awards night, where some serious and some fun awards will be dished out,” says Emilio.

While many of the club’s members are competitive, the club is inclusive, welcoming all runners from beginners to those targeting a sub-three-hour marathon. Training runs divide into groups with different paces, with the prevailing attitude that no one is left behind. With club support, members reach new goals and personal bests, says Emilio. “From young to old, we are very well rounded but competitiveness is all personal. Never does one of our fast runners make anyone else feel like a lesser runner. Because really, they aren’t.”

weekend with people checking in to see how we were all doing. And that support continued for weeks on end upon our return,” says Emilio. “When it comes down to it, every regular member seems to be someone who’d do anything for one of the others and that’s what keeps us together.”

The club also believes in giving back to the local community and raises funds through the Tannenbaum 10K race to support the local Community Centre 55’s Share a Christmas Program, with \$40,000 contributed in the past three years alone. [B](#)

Dianne Kapral is Canadian Running’s photo editor who recently PB’d at the Chicago Marathon.