

Dean Smith: My Fitness Journey



My fitness journey at Vessell's began in the summer of 2002. I laugh when I think about it, but my original intention was to learn enough from the people at Vessell's to be able to select the best home gym so I could work out at home. This particular part of my plan did not survive my first visit. Starting with a nice chat with Tonya behind the desk and then experiencing the friendly, helpful camaraderie from everyone at Vessell's, I knew after my first visit that I had found a fitness home.

My next plan was to use workout machines for toning and to help my chronically sore back. Free weights? No way. This particular part of the journey lasted a little longer, but under the helpful guidance of Don Shaffer and Mike Sandifer, it wasn't too long before I began lifting more seriously and also made significant changes in my eating habits. In a few years I had increased my weight from 170 to 185 pounds without changing my waist size. My back pain was a thing of the past.

I remember watching the people in the cardio room, which I good-naturedly called the "Squirrel Cage." I loved working out in the weight room but had no interest in Heart Smart or anything else in the cardio area. It was at this time that my daughter, Becky, joined the cross country team in high school. I started going to meets to cheer her on and was thrilled at the support that all those young runners gave each other. One fateful day, Becky asked me if I would start running with her. Well, when a teenage daughter asks her daddy to do something with her, the answer is usually, "Yes." Becky also has organized four 5K Run/Walks to support my school (and single-handedly raised over \$8,000 for the B.W. Robinson School PTO), and I have participated in all of these. I was running regularly but maintained that I would never run more than 3 to 4 miles. That didn't last either, and, three half-marathons later, I am now training for my first (and perhaps only!) full marathon next October.

I have no idea where my continually-evolving fitness plan will take me next. I do know that even if, for whatever reason, I am not able to complete my marathon, I will not consider this a failure. It seems to me that success in fitness, as in life, is not in the accomplishments as much as it is in the journey. I believe that for all of us at Vessell's a good part of our success is simply showing up and "breathing the air." I want to thank Peggy and Company for providing such a special, welcoming environment, and I look forward to many more years of sharing the gift of fitness with my friends at Vessell's.