

# FOCUS ON FREEMAN ACADEMY

## Boston Marathon

## Times Two

Suzanne Koerner '83  
Renee Neufeld '98



By Vernetta Waltner

**W**ho would actually WANT to run 26.2 miles? What can be gained or learned through the training process for a marathon? How can the discipline of running enhance or strengthen one's Christian faith? Renee Neufeld (1998) and Suzanne (Brockmueller) Koerner (1983?) share about their running and marathon experiences.

Coaches often draw parallels between sports and life experiences. At Freeman Academy, our coaches also include the connection between students' spiritual lives and athletics. Most of us need encouragement in some form to begin and continue any activity. For Suzanne, it occurred as a desire to imitate an admired individual and for Renee it was timing.

Suzanne wanted to imitate big brothers, Lee and Joe, as she observed them working out at home for

Freeman Academy's cross country and track teams. At the age of eight, she began to follow them when they ran. Apparently, they never discouraged her efforts as she tagged along.

Renee had some free time after school waiting for her mom to finish work. She decided to run along with the students on the track team even though she did not officially join the team as a seventh grader. Coach Kevin Hofer saw potential and encouraged her to join the team the following year. Another inspiration was hearing Suzanne's chapel presentation about her experience at the 1996 Boston Marathon.

The discipline of running offers unique faith experiences. Renee appreciates the time of solitude to pray during a training run. She has also experienced faith conversations with fellow runners as they compete

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August 2010



*Where Faith & the Arts  
Bring Learning to Life*



*Our Mission...*

*Freeman Academy, as part of Christ's church, integrates Christian principles into all learning while maintaining a standard of excellence in academics, creative arts and athletics. Freeman Academy is Mennonite in origin and doctrine, but seeks to serve students of all Christian faiths. A safe, caring and nurturing atmosphere prepares students to accept God's call to live a life of compassionate service and discipleship to Christ.*

# Boston Marathon Times Two

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in a marathon. It has been interesting to find out who is willing to speak about Christian faith.

Suzanne feels that running has strengthened her faith commitment in similar ways. She experienced no major injuries during her high school running career and made it a practice to express her thanks to God for the ability to train for and compete in two marathons as a young mother.

Training for competitions has positively influenced their lives in a variety of ways. Suzanne feels that the disciplines of training for a race through nutrition, rest, exercise and social priorities carried over into her faith life of prayer, Bible study and church. Renee agrees and also sites other examples. She is identified as a runner by many persons. Both take endurance. Neither is easy all of the time. In order to have focus, it is helpful to have a goal. For running it might be a race, or for faith one would want to focus on a right relationship with God.

A decision to run a marathon is not made lightly! Exact circumstances vary, but the common denominator has to be a personal conviction that will withstand the rigorous schedule of diet, rest and exercise.

Suzanne’s adult running career began after participating in a few local road races with sister, Cindee. After hearing that Oprah was going to run a marathon,

Suz decided that she could do that too! Thus began her training to run ONE marathon in the Twin Cities in fall of 1995. After finishing that race, she learned that her time qualified her to run at Boston in the spring of 1996. At first she didn’t consider competing, but reconsidered after learning that it was the historic 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the event.

Renee’s desire to improve over a disappointing senior track season prompted her to begin a running club while at Hesston College with the goal of running just one marathon. After her initial competition, she decided on her next goal – to run a marathon in each of 50 states. Qualifying for Boston would be her Massachusetts race. Now that she has completed that race, there is not as much pressure for her to finish in specific times as other competitions don’t have qualifying standards. She hopes to have run in 25 states/marathons by the end of 2010.

Both women agree that a running routine is a benefit physically, emotionally and spiritually. It is personally fulfilling and helps to work off frustrations and put life into a balanced perspective. While Renee competed in cross country during her college years, Suzanne chose not to and regrets that decision. The opportunity to coach both cross country and track at Freeman Academy the past few years has been a great way for her to share hopes, dreams and challenges with young athletes.

At this time, Renee and Suzanne have never competed against each other. It is also interesting to note that each of them was 30 years old when running at Boston! They both encourage others in their running “journeys” and coordinate the annual Minn-Kota MCC Sale Fun Run. Thanks to Renee and Suzanne for sharing their stories about running and faith!

## Change

The daily summer walk around campus appears quiet. The arboretum is lush and beautiful

with the abundance of rain this year. Occasionally, teachers, students, or visiting alumni wander through the buildings and grounds.

The casual onlooker might not notice, but numerous building improvements took place while classes were on vacation: window replacements in Music Hall, the north steps to Pioneer Hall, tuck point and repair on the Administration Building exterior walls, and a new membrane on the Ad Building roof. A new HVAC unit on the Ad Building roof was also installed due to an internal fire last spring. Carpet was replaced in the fifth

and sixth grade room on the lower level of the Administration Building.

Approximate costs for these projects are listed as follows:

tuck pointing and repair .....	\$ 25,000
new membrane on the roof ... ..	\$ 25,335
north steps of Pioneer Hall .....	\$ 9000

Unclaimed property from the Mildred Wollman estate came from MMA this spring in the amount of \$21,000. Emma Epp’s estate gift of \$10,000 will also help cover the costs of these projects. Gifts from the Auxiliary of \$5000 and Mennonite Aid Society dispersal of \$2500 were allocated toward projects. The estates and

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## Change

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gifts allowed us to accept the bids for these projects. We continue to seek funding from alumni and constituents for the remaining \$21,000.

Eighteen new computers, four printers and a laptop were purchased on lease to replace the computers in our lab. Older computers will be moved to classrooms for course work including our new independent studies online learning with APEX.

Changes in personnel for the 2010-11 year include a new dorm supervisor, Deborah Gray, a retired business person from Texas who recently moved to Freeman. Melinda Hora will take over as food services director after assisting in the kitchen for the past five years.

Staff at Freeman Academy remained faithful through the economic down-swing last year when wages were frozen and retirement was discontinued. This year, 2010-2011, a three percent base increase and a year of experience will be returned to staff, plus two percent retirement. Our positive year-end balance makes this possible.

Enrollment is steady. At the time of this writing we have 70 students enrolled with more prospective students still making decisions. We anticipate hosting seven students in our dorm this year from Korea, Thailand, Taiwan and the Gambia as well as local communities.

A strategic planning session is planned for mid-September with a core group of board members, development committee and constituents. It is our desire to create short and long range goals for Freeman Academy and to prioritize those efforts. Please contribute your thoughts by responding to the questions listed in the related article.

We are grateful for our constituents' support. Through your generosity we have been able to undertake some long overdue plant projects. Continue to pray for Freeman Academy as a new school year begins and lives are touched.

*Pam Tieszen*

**Pam Tieszen, FA  
President**



## Ribs at the Ranch 2010

Thanks to all who participated at the third annual ribfest on June 26 as a worker or consumer! We were thankful that the storm veered to the north and that folks came out after it had passed! It was especially gratifying to have several younger alumni assist with organizing several activities: Running of the Pigs – Ashley Unruh, dunk tank – Bethany Miller, and bounce house/face painting – Jaden Miller! We look forward to next year's event on Saturday, June 25 – mark your calendars now!



**Ribs at the Ranch  
2010**



**Quiltfest 2010**

## Why Freeman Academy?

*By John Butkus, Board Member*

Why should I send my kids to Freeman Academy? Just what is up with that place anyway? That second question is a whopper, a real mystery. If I could figure out just what makes this place tick and keep on ticking for over a hundred years in a small town, these questions might be answered more easily. If anyone could pen the answer to what makes this place “work,” I am convinced we would have needed to build more classrooms long ago.

It became obvious to me long before becoming part of Freeman Academy's family that if it were not for generosity, the school would have closed or not been established in the first place. However, one cannot simply state that just generous donations allow FA to exist.

We ask families to entrust their children to us. Imagine if these same parents and students could see and

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## Why Freeman Academy?

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“feel” what my three kids have experienced, and what my wife and I have witnessed in making this commitment. It’s almost as if it can’t be put into words, but has shown itself to work miraculously generation after generation.

My first visit to FA’s campus was in the early 80’s at Schmeckfest time, and I was skeptical about whether I wanted to spend my weekend here. When the day was over, I was amazed at what happens on this campus. It is not normal for folks to volunteer and donate to the magnitude that one sees during this great fundraising event – WOW and still WHY?

Why are there so many families, some who no longer have children attending the school, who continue to give huge amounts of time, money, estate gifts, even careers? I am amazed at the number of couples and single alumni who have no children, but are incredibly giving to Freeman Academy throughout their lives.

Here are my conclusions. While the nurture of Christian faith is the foundation of Freeman Academy’s existence and the most important reason for attendance given by most families, a deep, emotional love for the school has been planted in its constituents.

This has become clear to me while observing our kids as they attend FA and through my personal involvement on the board of directors and the buildings and grounds committee. I also realized it when our oldest son and his large class graduated. Some of those in the class of 2009, including my son, had a difficult time leaving for college. Typical homesickness aside, this was quite different. Surrounded by love and being nurtured all those years at FA - no wonder it was hard to leave.

That’s where the “family” description comes from when many are asked to describe Freeman Academy. Teaching, nurture, care and love – sounds like a family. I don’t think our students forget that. So maybe that’s where the continual generosity comes from.

Love: a gift from God, Himself. And maybe that’s “why.”

It must be love, a deep love for the school. All the gifts and sacrifice come from this.

## TRIP – Tuition Reduction Incentive Program

**DO YOU. . . Buy groceries, clothing, medical prescriptions, plants, gifts, dine at restaurants, etc.?**

**THEN . . . YOU could be using TRIP!**

Excitement around TRIP is building! In July credits were posted to family accounts to reflect rebates earned in the first three months of the program. Even with 25% of the rebates withheld for administrative costs, a total of \$869.33 was earned toward tuition accounts of 12 students. We have 20 individuals signed up for the program, which includes folks who are contributing to a specific student’s tuition or to the general financial aid pool.

We would like to invite your participation in an exciting new program that would contribute to Freeman Academy families’ tuition. Freeman Academy has adopted a program that includes BOTH our local businesses and national chain stores to assist families accumulate tuition dollars for their students. “TRIP” cards are used just like gift cards/certificates. FA is able to purchase gift cards from participating businesses at a reduced rate and then resell them to families at face value. Participants are able to use them like cash and 75% of the difference is placed in their tuition account while FA keeps 25% for administrative costs.

Families and students benefit even more if their friends and relatives also purchase the TRIP cards through them and in turn contribute to individual accounts. Constituents are also able to allocate contributions to the general financial aid pool.

For more detailed information, check it out on our webpage [www.freemanacademy.org](http://www.freemanacademy.org) and click on Resources then Parents, or contact Barb Yoder, coordinator, at [mbyoder@goldenwest.net](mailto:mbyoder@goldenwest.net) or 605-925-4713 to sign up.



**FA Graduating Class of 2010**  
**Back:** Alicia Hofer, Carl Lehmann, Aaron Tschetter,  
 Richard Friesen, Landon Miller, Jaden Miller  
**Front:** Lori Rensink, Renae Carlson, Aprille Hofer, Libby  
 Waltner

## Strategic Planning – A Vision for the Future of Freeman Academy

The FA Development Committee recently hosted two evening meetings for area alumni, constituents and community members to dialogue with parents, students, faculty and staff about directing Freeman Academy’s mission of Christ-centered education over the next 5-10 years. The committee would appreciate hearing from any of our readers from a distance that did not have the opportunity to be present for these meetings.

Attendees were divided into smaller focus groups to answer the following questions:

- 1. Do you feel that Freeman Academy’s mission statement reflects the accomplishments and outcome of our graduates?**

- 2. What do you feel is Freeman Academy’s most valuable quality?**
- 3. What do you feel is Freeman Academy’s weakest feature?**
- 4. How would you like Freeman Academy to “look” in the year 2020?**

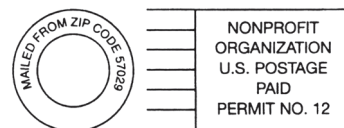
Freeman Academy is YOUR SCHOOL—it is in existence to provide Christian influences, to celebrate our history and to prepare youth for a future that is grounded in biblical teachings. Let us know what is valuable about we already provide and suggest what areas need attention.

A group of constituents including representatives from the FA board of directors, development committee and school community will be meeting September 10 and 11 to discuss the comments and suggestions from those meetings.

Contact Vernetta at 925-4237, ext. 235 or [vwaltner@freemanacademy.org](mailto:vwaltner@freemanacademy.org) to provide your input. We WANT YOU to help frame Freeman Academy’s future! Please join the “conversation.”



**FA 8th Grade Graduating Class of 2010**  
 Left to right: Jordan Barton, Alicia Miller,  
 Gabriel Eisenbeis, Meghan Hofer, Cole Hofer

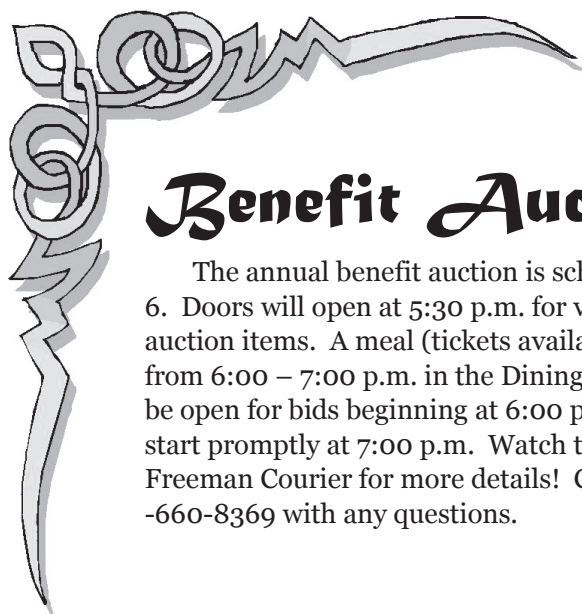


748 South Main, PO Box 1000  
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## Alumni Forum/Internet Connections

Freeman Academy is now on Facebook.com! If you are a Facebook.com member, just type become a “fan” of Freeman Academy and a “friend” of Ver-  
netta Waltner, development director, to keep in touch with former classmates  
and stay up-to-date with the current happenings at Freeman Academy!



## Benefit Auction

The annual benefit auction is scheduled for Saturday, November 6. Doors will open at 5:30 p.m. for viewing of both silent and live auction items. A meal (tickets available at the door) will be served from 6:00 – 7:00 p.m. in the Dining Hall. Silent auction items will be open for bids beginning at 6:00 p.m. and the live auction will start promptly at 7:00 p.m. Watch the school website and the Freeman Courier for more details! Contact DelVonna Wentz at 605 -660-8369 with any questions.

## Coming Events

### Annual Corporation

September 27 7:30 pm

### Goshen, IN Alumni Visit

October 1-3

### Newton, KS Alumni Visit

October 8-10

### FA Benefit Auction

November 6 6:00 pm

### School Musical

November 18, 19 7:30 pm

### Yuletide Banquet

December 16, 17 6:00 pm