

# One of Iowa's gems

## Marathon to Marathon: A strong tradition

By Trent Johnson  
Sports Source staff



**Spencer High School girl's track and Buena Vista football assistant coach Al Pierce poses with the new Marathon to Marathon banner. The longtime northwest Iowa coach has served as the race's director all 17 years. / Photo by Trent Johnson.**

Lois and LeRoy Lind. Leroy had been tinkering with the idea since the early 1980's, and the event would finally gain footing as planning began for the Buena Vista County Sesquicentennial Celebration to be held in 1994.

A year of planning ensued as Leroy, Mike Behrens, and Al Pierce worked to get the marathon sanctioned and ready for entries in 1996. Leroy would pass away prior the event's first running, but his vision has carried on, with the event drawing larger crowds each and every year.

Pierce, a former Laurens-Marathon coach and current coach for Spencer High School track and the Buena Vista University football team, has remained on since the event's inception as race director. Lois Lind has also stayed active with the event as the official spokesperson, and she awaits the brave milers at the finish line each year, offering a warm smile and a 'Thank you for running in our race.'

"It's just such a huge undertaking," said Marathon public relations director John Brostad. "I'm just so impressed with the job that Al does. Lois is in her mid 80's and going 100 miles an hour. She's just a ball of fire all the

time. I can't give those two enough compliments. The amount of time they put in is unbelievable."

For the past 17 years, early June has seen masses of running enthusiasts from around the nation converge upon the small town of Marathon, population of roughly 250.

Nestled between Laurens and Sioux Rapids on Highway 10, the appropriately named town has become home to one of Iowa's most unique and well-loved endurance trials.

One of only seven marathons in the state of Iowa as of 2012, the 26.2 mile trek from Storm Lake High School to Main Street Marathon was the brain child of

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No marathon goes off without a dead fast staff running it, and Lind and Pierce have a strong group working alongside them. JoAnn Behrens is secretary of the committee, Bruce and Laurie Stone handle treasury duties, Brostad, Andriette Wickstrom and Clark Fort deal with public relations and advertising, Marilyn Johnson is in charge of registration, and Storm Lake Sheriff Gary Launderville spearheads traffic control and safety. Also aiding is the board of directors with Phil Dukes presiding and providing the friendly voice over the loud speaker at the finish line. Steve Lind sits as vice president of the board, Behrens at secretary, Stone at treasurer and Terry Benson as a director.

"I really enjoy working alongside this committee," said Brostad. "We meet once a month from November to May planning this. Everyone has their job. Everyone does their job. Everyone is always trying to improve the race. They're always looking at the little things and what can be better. This is an outstanding group of people."

The 2012 running saw 197 finish the 26.2 mile trek, and nearly 400 total participants take part overall with a half-marathon, marathon relay and 5K also offered as part of the event.

The 197 in the full marathon is up from 182 in 2011, 171 in 2010, 167 in 2009 and 124 in 2008. 2012's field spanned from 15-to-65 years in age, with the winner, Curtis Huffman of Wessington Spring, South Dakota turning the the fifth fastest time in the event's history at 2:38.24.

Newell native Andrew Lichter also equaled the half-marathon best with a time of 1:24.18. Brostad, Storm Lake's longtime girl's track and cross country coach, battled the hot conditions to a new record by nearly ten minutes in his age field in the half-marathon at 1:56.44, and Wickstrom broke her own age group record in the half-marathon (1:42.08) in what was a historic 17th year.

John, who set the lofty benchmark for the 60-69 year old group was pleased with another running of the event as it went off without a hitch.

"Al Pierce, the Marathon to Marathon committee, the numerous volunteers and all the workers did a great job of again putting in a fantastic event."

Known for being a flat course that is friendly for those looking for a good Boston qualifying time, the point to point race along Iowa's black tops also garnered national attention when it was featured in the March/April edition of Marathon and Beyond.

With there are the occasional jabs at corn as high as an elephant's eye as far as the eye can see, and more cows along the course than spectators, the author proceeds rave at how well the event is ran and the charm of all

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Half-marathon winner Andrew Lichter, 21 of Newell, equaled a meet record time of 1:24:18 (Photo by Trent Johnson)

of those involved with it's operation; from Pierce himself to the volunteers who have happily manned the water and gatorade stations year after year.

A runner from Wyoming said "No glitz, no glamor - just running through the cornfields. It is simplicity at its best. If you love running for the sake of running and don't need bands to drown out the pain, then this is the race for you. This is a special part of America; not many see it. The people and views are lovely."

"It's a fast, flat course," said Brostad. "A lot of people come out here to try to get their Boston time's in, but they come away really impressed by how organized everything is and how wonderful the people of these two communities are. It's amazing how the people of Marathon and Storm Lake come out to support this event. Everything from the meals, to T-shirts, to shuttles, to water stations. It's an inspiring thing to be a part of"

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