

Sports

## **Veteran runners implore local folks to stay active**

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That was the message sent by noted running authors Kathrine Switzer and Roger Robinson of New Paltz in a dinner talk with the Orange Runners Club on Wednesday.

Switzer is the torch bearer of the modern women's marathon — she was the first female to compete in the Boston Marathon, in 1967, and her famous in-race clash with the event organizer helped spark a movement.

Robinson was one of the finest masters marathon runners in the world, and the author of several books on the sport. Both are focusing future writing projects on staying active in later years.

The couple offered insights to a crowd of 65 dinner guests, and in an interview with the Times Herald-Record.

What is your basic message to the local running clubs?

Switzer: "There are more women's runners now in the United States this year than men. What does that mean, and where are we going to go from here? I try to inspire them with being a good active club, to taking an active role in making

that happen, to being the visionaries of the future, to say, ‘Wow, what else can we do?’”

How important are running clubs?

Robinson: “Running clubs are the grass roots. They are the ones that make things happen. The most important thing they do is make people understand that what they are doing is significant. They give people a sense of belonging. They give people a sense of purpose. They record things. They take interest in things. They follow each other’s progress when they are running races.”

“The other things they do ... they are the bunch of volunteers who operate at a level of elite excellence. It is just astonishing how good they are. They are not going to screw up the course. They’re not going get the mile markers in the wrong place. They are not going to get the times wrong. They are not going to start a race late. Everything will be impeccable as if it was a huge scale organization, and here it is volunteers making it happen.”

What are the benefits of staying active, and how does running help?

Switzer: “The reality is the more you do, the more you can do. There is a wonderful guy who is in charge of gerontology studies at Stanford, and he has proved that people who stay active, age at a slower rate because they are constantly working their heart and the muscles — that is very significant. One of the things we keep proposing to people is to keep active. It doesn’t have to be marathon running. It is getting out there every day and getting some air and movement — 30 minutes of walking can reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease by 45 percent. The stats are unbelievable.”

“When you are 80 years old, are you going to be in a nursing home or still active? Simply putting one foot in front of the other can make that happen.”

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