

# Marathon milestone

## Sibling rivalry fueled Elk Grove Village man's quest to join 50 States Club

BY EILEEN O. DADAY  
Daily Herald correspondent

Growing up one of five brothers and three sisters, David Wcislo of Elk Grove Village knows a thing or two about sibling rivalry. Little did he guess it would extend well into adulthood and propel him into doing marathons.

Now, more than 20 years after running his first marathon — the New York City Marathon in 1994 with his four brothers — Wcislo realized a dream last month when he finished his 50th marathon, the Maui Oceanfront Marathon. He has now run one in each of the 50 states.

"My desire to run a marathon started six years before New York after seeing my twin brother finish the Chicago Marathon," says Wcislo, a former IT project manager with Kraft Foods. "It was fueled by both curiosity, because I was not an athlete, and envy, because he did it first."

Wcislo, who turns 71 in May, finished his milestone marathon first in his age group. He ran the race with his twin brother, Paul, and five of his siblings and his wife, Linda, were waiting at the finish to celebrate.

His daughter, Amanda Boland of Lombard, was unable to make the trip, but this much she knows: "He's inspired our whole family."

Wcislo reflected on his journey of going from a hard working computer specialist, who avoided the company fitness center, to a dedicated runner and now a member of the elite 50 States Marathon Club — there are only 4,184 members in the country.

"I marched into middle age working hard and not taking care of my general health," Wcislo says. "I gained enough weight to start growing out of my business suits. Not a lot, but enough to bother me."

After watching his twin finish his first marathon, Wcislo overcame his inhibitions and joined Kraft's Fitness Center in Northfield. He started on the stair-stepper and weight-lifting machines, and within one year he lost 15 pounds, he says.

"My cardio improved and



COURTESY OF DAVID WCISLO  
David Wcislo at his first marathon, the New York City Marathon, with his four brothers. Pictured on Nov. 6, 1994, toasting champagne at the finish in Central Park, from left, are: Bob, Joe, Dave, Paul and Lenny Wcislo.



COURTESY OF DAVID WCISLO  
David Wcislo and David Cook try to master the Hawaiian Shaka hand gesture, which means "hang loose," while running in the Maui Oceanfront Marathon in January.

I was generally healthier," Wcislo says.

He eventually called his twin to suggest they do a marathon together. When he learned all of his brothers would be running the New York City Marathon, he signed up. Less than one year later, all five brothers competed together and celebrated their accomplishment.

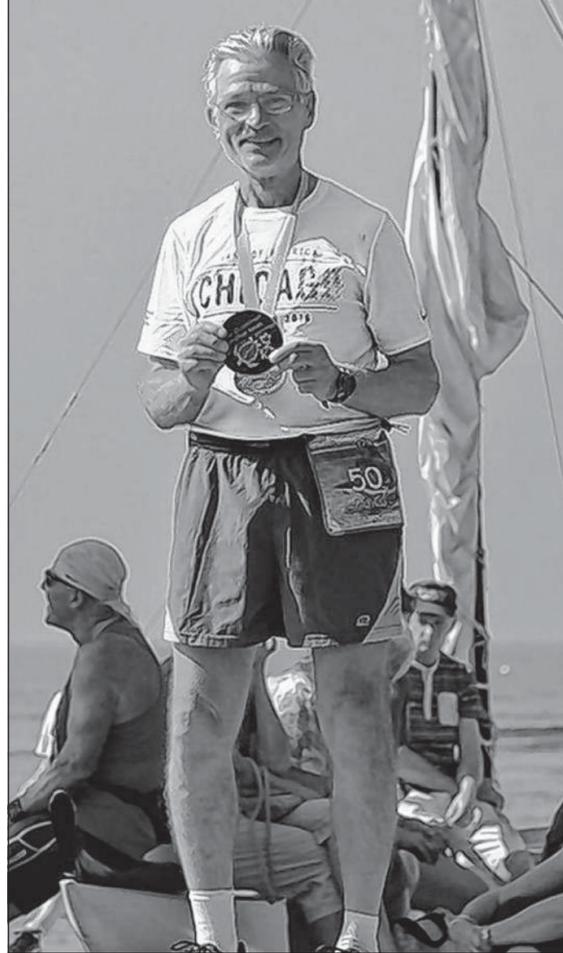
"I thought I was one and done, but through the company fitness center I made friends who ran marathons,"

Wcislo adds. "We ran several locally, and we all were attracted to traveling races."

Wcislo says the running lifestyle changed his outlook on life. His runs helped with stress and any down times, he says, and it built camaraderie. He found he enjoyed the training runs as much as the competitions.

"Running changed my attitude toward life — and toward work," Wcislo says.

Some 10 years later, after doing approximately 20 marathons in several states,



COURTESY OF DAVID WCISLO  
David Wcislo of Elk Grove Village stands on the podium at the Maui Oceanfront Marathon on Jan. 15 with his first-place medal in the 70-74 age bracket.

Wcislo and his brother talked about shooting for the 50 States Club.

Having retired around the same time, they looked into multistate marathon series, which grouped marathons on different days of the week, allowing runners to complete several at one time.

Their first attempt was the Center of the Nation Series, in which they completed marathons in North Dakota, South Dakota and Nebraska. The series also includes Wyoming and Montana, however the Wcislo brothers had already completed those, so they skipped them and instead toured Mount Rushmore and the Black Hills.

The following year, in 2014, they completed 16 races, leaving them just one short of their 50-state goal.

That's when Wcislo suffered an injury.

"One month after my last marathon, my 49th, I went gimp," Wcislo says. "I later found out it was a pinched nerve in my leg."

His diagnosis, surgery and road to recovery were documented recently by Northwest Community Healthcare, who credited Dr. Shaun O'Leary with treating his symptoms and performing outpatient peripheral nerve surgery, which led to his recovery.

"It took a full two years before I ran another marathon," Wcislo says, "but I was back."

He's not done yet. Wcislo plans to run the Little Rock Half Marathon in March and the Glass City Marathon in Toledo in April.

## Get tips on wellness at COD's Senior Expo

BY JENNIFER DUDA  
College of DuPage

College of DuPage Continuing Education will host "Wisdom, Wonder and Wellness," the fifth annual Senior Expo, from noon to 4 p.m. Sunday, April 23, in the Homeland Security Education Center, Room 1022, at College of DuPage's main campus, 425 Fawell Blvd., Glen Ellyn.

Aligned with Money Smart Week, this free event is designed to promote living well at any age, celebrating health, financial fitness and overall enrichment and well-being. Guests also will enjoy vendor table exhibits, offering information on personal health and finances and free one-on-one consultations by The Financial Planning Association of Illinois.

Free chair massages will be offered by the COD Professional Massage Clinic, refreshments will be provided, and attendees can enter to win one of several raffle prizes.

This year's keynote presentation is a panel discussion on fiduciary responsibility moderated by Christine Benz, director of personal finance at Morningstar. Expert panelists include Ed Gjertsen, former chairman of the Financial Planning Association; Gail Marks Jarvis, award-winning author and Chicago Tribune columnist; Karen Nystrom, national advocacy director for the Financial Planning Association; and Knut Rostad, founder and president of the Institute for the Fiduciary Standard.

Sponsorship opportunities are available for this event, which in the past has attracted more than 400 people. Vendor opportunities also are available for area businesses and organizations serving the DuPage County senior community.

In addition to educational opportunities, College of DuPage Continuing Education offers a variety of programs to lifelong learners in the area, including free Lunch Break Lectures, special Plus 50 programming, collaborations with MAC theatrical and musical productions, and discounts for adults 55 and older.

The Senior Expo is free. Registration is welcome, but not required. For more information or to register for this event, contact (630) 942-2208 or ce@cod.edu.

## Babowice: Invasive plants threaten ecosystem

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"Here in the Midwest, the destruction of the tall grass prairie represents one of the largest losses of an ecosystem in history. In Iowa, about 1 percent of the prairie remains."

There are many characteristics in plants that enable them to adapt and survive. Even when threatened plants show resilience.

"My research has focused on evaluating characteristics that allow weeds to survive the control tactics used against them," said Hartzler, whose background includes degrees in plant protection and weed science.

"Recently, I've been investigating the suitability of milkweed found in crop fields for monarch butterfly reproduction. Loss of milkweed in the Midwest is believed to be one of the reasons for the decline in monarch population."

Adaptation is a key plant survival strategy, Hartzler said. "Plants have an advantage over animals in that many

### Check it out

The Schaumburg Township District Library suggests these titles on extinct plants:

- "Saving Endangered Plants and Animals," by James Bow
- "How to Save a Species," by Marilyn Baillie
- "Plant a Pocket of Prairie," by Phyllis Root
- "Endangered: Wildlife on the Brink of Extinction," by George McGavin

species have persistent seed that can remain viable in the soil for a long time," he said.

"If an area is converted to a farm field for many years but then abandoned and left fallow, seeds of certain species may be able to regenerate the population. Not all plants can do this, but many do."

Some plants, such as milkweed, do not adapt and can become endangered or threatened.

The fact that each plant

produces hundreds of seeds enables species to thrive under difficult circumstances.

"Prolific seed production also leads to diversity within the population," Hartzler said. "Diversity increases the odds of having individuals that have a trait that allows that individual to survive a control tactic."

Then there's plant design, which fosters survival.

"Herbicide resistance gets all the attention now, but there are other traits that allow weeds to survive: the prostrate growth habit of dandelion allows it to survive mowing, spines on thistles protect them from grazing animals," Hartzler notes.

"One classic example is called mimicry. Before herbicides, hand weeding was used to control weeds in rice. Over time, barnyard grass biotypes were selected that looked exactly like rice, so the people weeding the fields were unable to tell the two species apart and they left the barnyard grass in the field."

While humans are the major cause of plant

extinction, invasive plants can destroy native ecosystems.

The Midwest has more than 300 invasive plant species. These are aggressive plants that will prevent native plants from regenerating. Many plants featured in gardens are invasive, like winged burning bush, buckthorn and Japanese honeysuckle.

Pests can also threaten plants, such as the beetle that carried Dutch elm disease in the 1970s, and the current problem with the Emerald ash borer.

Ultimately, under extreme conditions, there are plants that cease to exist. There is plenty of fossil evidence that points to trees, vines and plants that were abundant in prehistoric times. Illinois happens to be a prized location to find fossil evidence of extinct plants and animals that existed in swamps that covered the landscape about 280 million years ago.

How can you help prevent plant extinction? Volunteer at the local forest preserve. Forest preserve districts in

Cook and Lake counties offer opportunities for individuals and groups to help with habitat restorations, seed collections and invasive species removal.

Cook County offers Citizen Scientist in Action! programs for teens to learn environmental stewardship strategies. See fpdcc.com for Cook County opportunities and lcpfd.org for options in Lake County. Lake County Forest Preserve offers group and individual volunteer opportunities in education, working in display gardens and directly with seeds at their Native Seed Nursery.

### If you go

**What:** Senior Expo

**When:** Noon to 4 p.m. Sunday, April 23

**Where:** Homeland Security Education Center, Room 1922, College of DuPage, 425 Fawell Blvd., Glen Ellyn

**Cost:** Free

**Info:** ce@cod.edu or (630) 942-2209

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Get the answers to your questions about the upcoming **April 4 Referendum**. **VOTE on April 4**

### District 200 schools have significant facility needs.

We are seeking voter approval to issue \$132.5 million in bonds to help finance needed repairs, renovations and upgrades to 19 of 20 schools.

Stop by anytime during the designated time slot at a school of your choice.

Friday, February 24	Tuesday, February 28	Tuesday, March 14	Friday, March 17
9:00 - 10:30 a.m. Monroe Middle School 1855 Manchester Road Wheaton	9:00 - 10:30 a.m. Franklin Middle School 211 E. Franklin Street Wheaton	9:00 - 10:30 a.m. Hubble Middle School 3560 Herrick Road Warrenville	9:00 - 10:30 a.m. Edson Middle School 1125 S. Wheaton Avenue Wheaton

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