



Leinenkugel's Pure Water Days Races: A Family Tradition

The Leinenkugel's Pure Water Days Races have been a staple in the Chippewa Valley for over 45 years. Hundreds of runners and walkers of all ages gather together to participate in races ranging from 200 Meters to 13.1 miles.



These races hold a special place in the hearts of the Wendtland/Loew Family, as it has been a cherished tradition for their family for over 14 years. Starting with Jeremy Wendtland's initial participation in 2006, the race participants gradually grew to include his wife, Jill and his siblings and their spouses: Wendy & David Loew, Jason & Heidi Wendtland, Joe Wendtland, and Molly and Ross Barger. Numerous nieces and nephews - Belinda, Jarod, Gabriel, Rosemary, and Matthew Loew, and Jack & Aubrey Wendtland, - have also joined in. Some years, even his Aunt Marilyn Leduc and mother Joyce have participated and have always cheered on the sidelines. The event provides a unique opportunity for family members of all ages and fitness levels to come together and participate in various races, creating unforgettable memories along the way.

"Our family always enjoyed playing sports at home even though we weren't in competitive sports at school. The Pure Water Days Races were a really fun way for us to compete against each other and other people," Wendy Loew shared.

The races offered a range of distances suitable for everyone, from the little ones starting with the 200-meter dash to the adults challenging themselves in the longer races. "The variety of races available is really unique and fitting for all kinds of families. There are races that meet the needs of the littles but also the family members that wanted to be competitive in the longer races," Heidi added.

As the children got old enough they all began participating in the races. They started out in the 200 Meter Dash then, by 4 years old, many of them jumped over to the 1-mile race. Now many of the family members participate in the 1-mile, then participate in the 2-mile walk afterward. Jason, Jeremy, Joe, David, and Jarod compete in the 4-mile most years.

Wendy shared, "We would run the 1-mile with the kids when they were little. The race is very family friendly and David could run the race with the kids and then run the 4 mile race competitively after. Since we do the walk, with the design of the course, we get to cheer on our family and other runners at the end of their race as us walkers are coming in."

The friendly competition within the family added an extra layer of excitement and motivation for each member to improve their performance year after year. David shared, "It's fun to compete against yourself and have different times from previous years to compare to." "Since our family does this every year, it's fun to compete against everyone. Personally, I try to meet that 8 minute per mile mark, as long as I can do that, I know I am doing okay," Joe added.

The thrill of achieving personal bests and competing against familiar faces from previous races adds to the overall experience of the race every year. Jarod shared, "It's a really cool experience because I don't know these racers from anywhere else except competing against them each year at the races. We show up on race day, and there they are, the same people I compete against year after year, with a few new faces added in there too, of course." David added, "You run into the same runners at different road races around the area and each time you meet you see who is going to be ahead."

Some of the families most memorable moments from the races include David's last-minute sprint to maintain his position and hearing, "he dropped the hammer" from his opponent, Jason's triumphant feeling of overtaking his brother-in-law and nephew during the 4-mile race and the feeling that it's probably the one and only time he'd beat them since they are faster than he is, when Matt got to beat his older cousin Jack, and Gabriel recalls how tired everyone is at the end of the races each year. The support from the community, including the enthusiastic cheers from the Chi Hi Football players, and the fun shirts, adds to the festive atmosphere of the event every year.

Belinda enjoys seeing the start of the race, "It's amazing to watch all the half-marathoners and 4-milers take off at the beginning of the race. Since it goes slightly uphill, you can get a really cool view of the start and you can see how large this event really is."

The family's commitment to participating in the races each year not only promoted a healthy and active lifestyle but also served as a meaningful way to bond and create lasting traditions. The shared experiences - from training together at grandma's house to celebrating with breakfast at Chippewa Family Restaurant together afterwards - strengthened their familial ties and provided an opportunity for multi-generational involvement in the event.

"Having this race on the calendar every year really encourages us to get out and train before August comes around because you want to do your best," Jeremy said.

Looking ahead, the Wendtland/Loew Family eagerly anticipates continuing their participation in the Leinenkugel's Pure Water Days Races for many more years to come. The event has become a cornerstone of their family calendar, marking a time for togetherness, celebration, and friendly competition. As they prepare for future races, they are motivated by the joy, camaraderie, and sense of community that the event brings, inspiring them to keep the tradition alive for generations to come.

