

The History of the North Jersey Masters and the Ridgewood Run

The running community is a special one. It is comprised of people from all walks of life and running means something different to each of us. For some, running is a social outlet, for some it is a way to get healthy and fit and for some, running means training and competing and testing your body's limits. For Toshi d'Elia, running started as a way to connect and spend time with her husband, Fred. Fred d'Elia, being a successful runner in his own right and a world record holder in track and field, was able to quickly see the enormous amount of natural talent that his wife had. He immediately began training Toshi as an elite runner, with the best that the New York Road Runners had to offer. Fred knew that Toshi would benefit by training with runners of similar speed and ability in order to improve. North Jersey Masters continues to follow that philosophy today. Eventually, Fred, who was our club's very first president along with the eventual treasurer, Jim Manno, came up with the idea to start a running club in New Jersey in an effort to improve Toshi's training. So, in 1976, North Jersey Masters was born. What a wonderful blessing it is to have access to this local thriving running club where we can work towards meeting *our* fitness goals, form friendships and build memories that last a lifetime. While we do not have the pleasure of spending this year's Ridgewood Run with Toshi and Fred, we do have some members in our club that were there for its inception.

North Jersey Masters Track and Field Club, or as we sometimes call it, NJM, is dedicated to the improvement of both recreational and competitive runners. We provide weekly workouts with professional coaching in the spring, summer and fall within a supportive and friendly club environment. With almost 500 members, North Jersey Masters is one of the largest running clubs in northern NJ. NJM is a

501(C) 3 non-profit corporation registered in the state of New Jersey. We are proud to be the organizers of the Fred d'Elia Memorial Day Ridgewood Run which attracts close to four thousand runners each year. But what was the Ridgewood Run like when it first started?

Before the race really got off the ground and became well known, this event was a family affair and Fred wore many hats! He certified the course, he served as the race director and he was the official timer! His wife Toshi was responsible for hand delivering the race applications around the neighborhood and when the runners took their marks, they were sporting hand-made bibs that their daughter Erica made with a black marker. It was worth their efforts because this event has evolved into what we know and love today as the Ridgewood Run. People come from all over the country to be part of this special tradition and as we enter our 45th year we felt it was important to remember and celebrate the roots of our club and its founding members.

Today, the Ridgewood Run offers a 10K, a 5K, the Masters Mile and the Elite Mile, which all reward the winner with a monetary prize. We also offer the Wheel Chair 10K and the Kids Fun Run. We evolved from manual timing into sponsored time clocks at every mile, announcers cheering on each finisher, chip time scoring and online registration that makes signing up a breeze. With the help of all of our volunteers, members, sponsors and competitors we look forward to containing this healthy, family oriented tradition for many years to come!