



The Role of Care-Giving Cheerleaders

LifeCare Memos® – Messages of Compassion

Marathon to Athens

In 490 BCE, Pheidippides, a Greek soldier, ran from Marathon to Athens (about 25 miles) to inform the Athenians about the outcome of the battle with the invading Persians. The distance was filled with hills and other obstacles and Pheidippides arrived in Athens exhausted and with bleeding feet.

After telling the townspeople of the Greeks' success in the battle, Pheidippides fell to the ground dead. In 1896, at the first modern Olympic Games, a race was held of approximately the same length in commemoration of the respected Pheidippides.

Marathon Length

During the first several modern Olympics, the marathon was always a distance of approximate length. In 1908, the British royal family requested that the marathon start at the Windsor Castle so that the royal children could witness its start.

The distance from the Windsor Castle to the Olympic Stadium was 42,195 meters (or 26 miles and 385 yards). In 1924, this distance became the standardized length of a marathon.

2012 Olympics

The 2012 Olympic Marathon Course in London was used for both the men's and women's marathon races. The 42.195 km route consisted of one short circuit of 3.571 kilometers (about 2.2 miles) followed by three circuits of 12.875 kilometers (8 miles).

The course, which was designed to pass as many of London's notable landmarks as possible, started and ended in The Mall within sight of Buckingham Palace and extended as far as the Tower of London in the east and the Victoria Memorial in the west.

Breaking Tradition

For various logistical reasons, the route of the 2012 marathon was changed from that which was originally envisaged in London's initial bid for the games and it also broke with the normal Olympic tradition that the race finish inside the main Olympic Stadium.

Modern Finish Line

Since the modern games were founded, it had become a tradition for the men's Olympic marathon to be the last event on the athletics calendar, with the finish line located **inside** the Olympic Stadium, often within hours of, or even incorporated into, the closing ceremonies. The dramatic end to the Olympics signified the endurance and perseverance of those who competed.

Care-Giving Cheerleaders

In many ways this model of the marathon parallels the role that care-giving “cheerleaders” play at Elim Care facilities, in Minnesota, that minister to the healthcare needs of adults and seniors. Adult Residents in Elim communities have run the marathon we call life. Many are nearing the end of their race as they enter our “stadium” to run their final laps. We don’t know exactly how many laps they may have left, but our role is to support and cheer them on to victory.

How We Cheer

The opportunity and privilege presented to healthcare givers every day is to encourage the Residents with our words and affirm them with our love as we provide for their daily needs.

Yes, it is hard when our “runners” finally, and sometimes painfully, cross the finish line. But before we have a chance to fully process our grief, other “runners” are entering our “stadium” and they need our care and “cheers” as well.

As life’s “marathon” continues to unfold before us, we are reminded that we are all running our own race. We never know when it will be time for us to enter the “stadium” and begin what will be our final laps.

This ultimate reality of life causes me to identify with Paul's words in the Bible which were given to the church in Corinth:

"You've all been to the stadium and seen the athletes race. Everyone runs; one wins. Run to win.

All good athletes train hard. They do it for a gold medal that tarnishes and fades. You're after one that's gold eternally.

I don't know about you, but I'm running hard for the finish line. I'm giving it everything I've got. No sloppy living for me!

I'm staying alert and in top condition. I'm not going to get caught napping, telling everyone else all about it and then missing out myself" (I Corinthians 9:24-27, The Message).

Whether you are running your final lap, cheering on others in the stadium or taking a breather in your race, there is One who can help, guide, comfort and lead you on your journey.

If you have questions about your journey or the final lap, please contact your chaplain—we'd be honored to talk with you.

Highland Goodman, 291212

LifeCare Memos[®]

When experiencing the stresses of life, people need support. The Psalmist needed that support and found it when he turned to **GOD**. He said, *"Look to my right and see; no one is concerned for me. I have no refuge; no one cares for my life. I cry to You, O **LORD**; I say, 'You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living'"* (Psalm 142:4-5).

LifeCare Memos are designed as messages of compassion that integrate biblical guidelines for emotional and spiritual well-being. Topics focus on various life-care issues and address them from the perspective of Scripture.