

Arkansas Runner Interview – Shelly Matthews, Treasurer

AR: Tell us about yourself, family, work history, etc.

Shelly: I am a Saline County girl born and bred! I grew up in Benton and graduated from Benton High School. My family and I moved to Bryant in 2000 where we stayed until 2021. I met Dennis in fall of 1998, and we clicked immediately and made in official in February 1999. (When you know, you know!) We have two sons, Cole & Connor. Both graduated from Bryant High School. Once the boys grew up and left the nest, Dennis and I moved to the much quieter Sardis Community in Bauxite. We bought our current house last summer, gave it a major facelift and settled there in October 2021.

I have worked for the Arkansas Department of Health for the last five years. I license and regulate lay midwives who offer home birth services to Arkansas women and their families. It is a fascinating and never boring job! Be careful asking me about it – you may soon wish you had not! My former job was a Labor & Delivery nurse at UAMS. Although, I strongly disliked the L&D world in LPN school, I fell in love with it during RN school and knew that is where I wanted to be.

Nursing is a second career for me. From 1998-2011, I worked in banking. My first banking job was at Union Bank in downtown Benton. Nursing was always something I had wanted to do, and I was glad to be given the chance to fulfill that dream.

AR: How long have you been running and what got you started?

Shelly: I have been running for about 15 years, taking occasional breaks along the way! My family, including my mother, has a history of cardiac ailments. My mother, and her mother, both had massive heart attacks at age 34. The year I was turning 34, I decided I needed to take better care of my heart and I started running.

AR: What is a typical running week for you?

Shelly: I have struggled with consistency since moving out of town last fall. I currently run mainly on the weekends but am hoping to get some weekday runs started again once the temperatures drop a little.

AR: Are you a member of any running club other than the Striders? If so, what club?

Shelly: Striders is the only running club I belong to.

AR: Favorite place to run? Where/why?

Shelly: I love to run anywhere with an out and back or a long loop. I cannot stand to run the same course over and over trying to get miles in.

AR: How about training partners? Do you have any or do you train alone?

Shelly: Kim Ledoux was my consistent training partner for the last several years. I enjoy working out with Laura Babbitt and Sundays with Jayme Butts-Hall are a staple!

AR: What have been your favorite races?

Shelly: I love the Little Rock marathon. It was my very first race and it holds a special place in my heart. I love the energy of the spectators and the dedication of the race team and volunteers to put on such a fantastic event.

AR: What has been your longest racing distance?

Shelly: I have completed the marathon distance a total of 6 times.

AR: What are your PR's at various distances?

Shelly: I like to say I am a Clydesdale, not a thoroughbred. Speed training has caused me many injuries over the years. As long as I am moving forward, I am winning!

AR: Most memorable race? Explain.

Shelly: I walked the Little Rock marathon earlier this year with my sister. It was her first marathon, and we had a great time talking and laughing for 26.2 miles! Her husband wants to join us in 2023 because he was so jealous of the fun we had.

AR: What have been some of your other most memorable events, moments, or achievements in running?

Shelly: I don't like running in the dark and I don't like danger noodles aka nope ropes aka Satan's spaghetti. So, the fact that I did the Full Moon 25k TWICE is something that I will always be proud of. I'm not sure if it's something I will ever do again, but I know better than to say never.

AR: How about shoes? Do you have a particular favorite?

Shelly: I love my HOKAs! They have really helped me manage knee and foot pain by offering tons of support.

AR: Are there any runners you particularly admire or respect, or perhaps who have helped you in some way? Explain.

Shelly: Kim Ledoux, Laura Babbitt, Jayme Butts-Hall, Billie Watts, Lennon Bates...I am going to get in trouble missing someone, but these ladies all inspire me to get out there and keep moving. I love to see posts on Facebook about a successful race or finishing a hard training run. I am inspired by the commitment and fortitude of so many wonderful runners and walkers!

AR: How about hobbies and activities other than running?

Shelly: My son and daughter-in-law gave me a Lego set for Mother's Day this year and I really enjoyed building the cutest orchid plant. It's a relaxing activity that Dennis and I enjoy doing together. We have built a space shuttle, a jeep and I am looking forward to building the New York City skyline soon.

AR: Favorite non-running spectator sport?

Shelly: Dennis and I started watching NFL football a few years ago. We root for the Kansas City Chiefs. We are looking forward to attending a game at Arrowhead Stadium in August. Go Chiefs!

AR: Favorite non-running leisure activity?

Shelly: I will read anything with words. Historical romance has been a staple of light, fluffy entertainment for me for many years. I also enjoy reading books with a strong female lead and I am fascinated with biographies.

AR: Favorite anything else you want to mention—book, movie, TV show, vacation destination, quote, etc.

Shelly: I have been fortunate enough to take some amazing trips in the last year. Last September, I traveled to Scotland with my sister and our husbands. We spent two weeks exploring Scotland from one end to the other. It was an incredible trip. In April, my sister and I enjoyed a girls trip to New York City where I am proud to say, we walked the legs off of our tour guide. We had a blast and plan to do it again next year!

AR: Running goals for the current year? Long term?

Shelly: I want to get back into running consistently. That is my goal for the upcoming year. As far as a long term goal, I want to stay healthy and injury free!

AR: Anything else you would like to say to your fellow Arkansas runners?

Shelly: Comparing your self to others is the root of all discontent. Stop looking at other runners (or walkers) and thinking that you are somehow lacking or falling short. Be proud of every step you take. Don't let a bad run or a bad walk destroy your confidence. Accept it, learn from and keep moving forward.