



57th Annual Great River Road Run welcomes runners from around the country

by Madelaine Gerard, Staff Writer
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ALTON - Now in its 57th year, the **Great River Road Run** has brought trained and beginning runners alike to **Downtown Alton** following the Thanksgiving Holiday.

With over 800 participants in this year's run, the event, which featured a 10-mile run or a 2-mile fun run or walk, is a fantastic opportunity to run one of the area's scenic highways on a brisk and yet very beautiful Saturday morning.

Race Director **Russ Colona**, along with wife and co-director **Kathy**, took over nearly 15 years ago from Alton High School's renowned track and field coach **Jim Wigger**. Now in his 80's, Wigger cheers on runners and every race as a spectator.

"57 years ago, Jim brought a group of his high school kids out here and ran the River Road and it's turned into this annual event every year," Colona said. "People come from about 26 different states. It's a great annual traditional event for everybody and helps fund our club for events we do all year long."



The 10-mile runners travelled up the scenic River Road, or **Route 100**, taking in the gorgeous bluffs and sometimes bitter cold winds from the Mississippi River. They ran five miles up the road and then turned around to head back to town

Traditionally, the run always takes place the weekend after Thanksgiving. Runners who come into town to visit families stuff their stomachs on Thursday and head out to the Great River Road Run on Saturday to burn off those extra calories, Colona mentioned.

"They'll go home a little sore, but they always have a great time," he said.

Without the nearly 120 volunteers, the work that the Alton Road Runners did during both this run and other events they hold throughout the year, the Great River Road Run wouldn't be what it is today.

"Some of these guys have been with me for 25 years, doing the same thing," he said. "They're all very dependable and after the race, we'll sit down and have a nice dinner."

[The race results, provided by Endurance Race Timing, are available online immediately following the race.](#) **Mike Schaefer** of Freeburg placed first in the 10-mile run with a

time of 57:30.27. Shortly behind in second with a time of 57:56.58 was **Luke Padesky** of St. Louis, Mo. **Justin Wieduwilt** of Collinsville came in third with a time of 58:10.56.

April Lund of Bismark, ND. was the first lady across the finish line with a time of 1:07:21.99. **Ali Kariem** of Granite City was the second woman across with a time of 1:10:08.77. **Colleen Madden** of Carlinville finished the 10-mile in 1:11:31.59.

The two-mile run/walk was not officially timed by Endurance Race Timing.



