DICK'S PITTSBURGH MARATHON MAKES FOR PERFECT FATHER-DAUGHTER MOMENT

CSC teammate Eric Fehr and his daughter Maddy have continued their love of running races and reached milestones by competing in the marathon.

It was a simple message of just a few words, but it took nearly a lifetime to say.

Eric Fehr wanted to cheer on his daughter, Maddy, during the DICK'S Sporting Goods Pittsburgh Marathon. The COVID-19 pandemic didn't derail her training and he wasn't about to let a virtual race get in the way of celebrating this major milestone either, so, he took advantage of the opportunity to create a digital cheer card and typed in the message:

"Congrats Maddy on your FIRST half-marathon!"



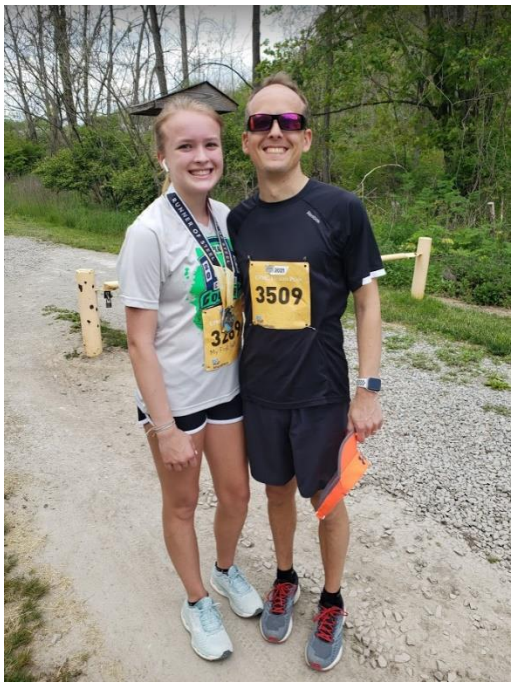
It was the culmination of countless miles on the road, during which time they learned so much about each other, life's most valuable lessons and the joy of spending quality time together pounding the pavement with no phones or distractions.

The 2021 race was virtual, so Maddy and Eric chose a day during May's National Runners' Month to complete the same route minus the other runners and raucous crowd. Well, some of them, anyway.

"I am incredibly proud that we didn't let the pandemic stand in the way of achieving her goal," said Eric. "My wife and son biked alongside us with their cowbells and made sure every passerby knew that we were running our half-marathon."

It was different, but one of the many lessons that running teaches us is that sometimes you just have to zag when you expect to zig. How we power through those challenges while taking it one step at a time can make all the difference.

“It was the hardest thing I’ve ever done in my life,” said Maddy, a rising senior and decorated runner at Moon Area High School in the Pittsburgh Area. “But it felt really good to be able to say I did it. I’m the only one of my friends and teammates that’s ever run a half-marathon, so it does feel kind of cool.”



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Eric and Maddy began their journey about a decade ago. When they started, there were no tracking apps or smart watches to scrutinize and analyze every step along the way. It was just a father and daughter going for a run after Eric finished his day at the DICK’S corporate office where he works as an eCommerce Category Planning Manager. They would run to a tree or a local school and then turn around and come home. They had a vague idea of how far they had gone, but that wasn’t really the point. They simply enjoyed doing it together.

“It’s been a great way to learn more about him and become closer,” said Maddy.

Maddy got a kick out of the rituals of being a runner, too. Eating spaghetti to load up on carbohydrates before a big race was always a favorite and one of many fun family memories.

Both Eric and Maddy ran cross country in middle school. Eric, however, did not compete again for nearly 20 years. When DICK’S began sponsoring the Pittsburgh Marathon, he decided to add it to his “bucket list” to run the full 26.2 mile marathon. A mere two years later, he did it.

While they both make running races look easy, there have been speedbumps along the way. During Maddy’s first 10K, when she was 9-years-old, she stopped. She felt like she couldn’t go any further and began to cry. Eric was right there with her and, along with some of the other runners, lifted Maddy’s spirits and boosted her confidence before she got back in the race.

In 2019, she claimed first place in her division in the same 10K while beating her personal record in the process.

“We remember the exact spot where that happened and laugh about it every time we go flying past it,” said Maddy.



There’s a saying that life is a marathon, not a sprint. Eric and Maddy have found a way to both run fast and slow down to cherish the moments as they come.