

## Twenty-Six Two Member Profiles

September 2011

In this edition of the monthly TST member profiles, we spotlight former First-Timer **Susie Duarte**. Susie was part of the 2009-10 first-time women's group that trained for the Austin Marathon on February 14, 2010. She is now training for her fourth marathon in October.



Susie and her family



Susie mid-race

I was born and raised here in my beautiful hometown of Austin, TX. I work full-time for the Texas Attorney General Child Support Division as an accountant. I've been with the agency for 17 years and I absolutely enjoy my job and my coworkers. I also work part-time as an Avon Representative and Tupperware Consultant. My family also keeps me quite busy. Our children are: Ali age 12 at Martin Middle School which is located on Town Lake (east); Alexander (who is on a breathing machine at home but attends school during the day) at Texas School for the Deaf age 16; and John Julian at Texas State University (sophomore), age 19.

In the first week of January 2008, I decided I wanted to begin running. I had never run before, but I would see the runners on Town Lake Trails and wished I could do that. I finally realized: I can. I read some articles about running as a beginner. I also have friends who ran and I asked them some questions on how getting started. I was thrilled about my New Year's Resolution.

I went to Town Lake Trails and just ran. Yes, I felt a bit uncomfortable, as if I was totally outside my comfort zone. I actually jogged, quite slow for about 20 minutes. That was A LOT for me but I was happy that I was done and I felt fine. I ended up running 2-3 miles for a couple of months then decided I wanted to do a 5k. I completed my first 5k in March 2008. I LOVED IT. I went up in miles to about 3-6 miles each time I went. Then of course I decided I HAD to do a 10k. I entered the Cap 10k race at the end of March 2008, once again I LOVED IT. That year I completed five 5ks and three 10ks. In the year of 2009 I completed ten 5ks and three 10ks. I ran the same races I did the previous year and my goal was to beat my chip times, which amazingly I did.

Mid-summer 2009, while browsing through our Work (picture) Gallery, I saw a picture of a co-worker completing his 15th marathon. I sent him an e-mail congratulating him and saying "Only in

my dreams would I ever be able to complete a marathon". He thanked me and sent me this link: [www.twentysixtwo.org](http://www.twentysixtwo.org).

After going to the website and getting chills just thinking about applying, I went ahead and applied for the first-time women's marathon training, in hopes to be one of the dozen chosen. A few weeks later, in July 2009, I received the email stating "Congratulations, you have been accepted to free marathon training!"

I was in shock...followed by "what did I just get myself into?" I had a family meeting to let everyone know this is something I really wanted and I needed their support. They totally understood and were behind me all the way. Since we have a son on a breathing machine, I wanted my husband to know that I am still there for my family but I would need his extra help during my runs which he gladly accepted.

We didn't realize exactly how much time I would be away from them, but we got through it and I'm so thankful. In October 2009, I completed my first half-marathon with a final time 1:58. Not bad! :) Training for my first marathon was from September 2009 through February 2010. During those months, I met some very awesome friends who I get to see every weekend and enjoy some long runs together.

On Valentine's Day 2010, I ran my first marathon, the Austin Marathon! As I crossed the finish line, not only were my husband, children and mother waiting for me...but since the Twenty-Six Two Marathon Club was in charge of the finish line, I also got to see my coach and other club members! I was beyond thrilled, I felt so accomplished. I was tired but none of that seemed to matter. I got my medal, found my family, took pictures and remained on cloud nine the rest of that day.

During these four running years, my college son has completed a few races and placed 2nd in his age group and my daughter completed two 5k's (Girls on the Run). I've been told I have inspired many family and friends to begin walking, jogging, and running. I recruited my cousins, Jeanie Slone and Barbara Rosas, and friends, Cylinda Dominguez and Corina Felan, to apply for free marathon training with TST. In February 2011 they crossed the line! This year, I recruited my high school friend Carolyn Villarreal and she's currently training with TST, and I hope to see her cross the finish line in February of 2012.

Today, I am training for my 5th half marathon ("See Jane Run") on October 9<sup>th</sup> and my 4<sup>th</sup> marathon ("Chosen for Adoption") in New Braunfels on October 29<sup>th</sup>. All funds will go to families who want to adopt orphans. A big thank you goes to my husband, children, and Twenty-Six Two Marathon Club for changing my life.

By the way, that co-worker that I emailed my congratulations to is, coincidentally, my Coach and founder of Twenty-Six Two Marathon Club. Talk about being at the right place at the right time! This was a life changing event for me.