

TEAM BEEF

POWER-PACKED PROTEIN FUELS MISSOURI RUNNERS

Team Beef has a story to tell. Well, more like 150 unique stories that make up one huge success story. Missouri Beef Council runners are diverse in their backgrounds, lifestyles, locations, and running goals. But one thing they all have in common is their love for and desire to promote beef as an important centerpiece of their race training and recovery methods.

by Tina Casagrand



TARA CASSIDY

36, St. Charles
Home day-care provider
Events: Half marathons

TARA CASSIDY HAS SIX SLOW COOKERS AND FIVE CHILDREN—more, if you count the day care she runs every weekday. And as long as we're counting, let's note something major she lost: 75 pounds in four years. It's a weight-loss story fit for TV, and her voice bubbles with warmth as she tells it.

Tara grew up running past the orchards in Murphysboro, Illinois. In high school, she ran track and cross country. She joined the Army, "and they made me run there," she says. "Then I took a ten-year hiatus from running. I realized I had gained some weight, and then I gained a little more weight, and next thing I knew, I was morbidly obese." Diabetes and high cholesterol followed. When her doctor suggested starting metformin, a diabetes medication for overweight and obese people, she realized she didn't want to depend on a medication for the rest of her life. "I like to say I'm self-motivated, but that was a big kick in the butt," she says.

She remembered what crossing a finish line feels like, but she had to walk for six months before being able to run. "It was so tough," she says, drawing out the long 'o.' "I was very, very heavy. And I was really worried that I was the fat chick and people were looking at me." But runners support one another. Tara joined a group of local ladies who run together. "Every Saturday morning, doggone, before the sun comes up, there we are running the streets of St. Charles," she laughs.

After walking a half marathon, a friend encouraged her to join Team Beef. "I thought, 'I like beef; we just bought half of a side of cow! This is easy!'" Tara says. She attended the group's annual webinar. As a mother

of active children, the nutrition lessons were especially important. She learned that eating beef is not purely for protein. "A serving of beef has a ton of B vitamins and ten different vitamins and minerals. There's zinc, riboflavin, you know, all the things you see in your women's one-a-day, that's part of your whole health," she says. Exercise and a healthy diet freed her entire life. "My diabetes is gone, cholesterol gone, mild depression gone," she says. "One of the biggest things is that I can just go shopping at a regular store." Now Tara shares her story and knowledge to anyone who will listen.

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"I read somewhere that if you play a sport when you're a kid—any kind of sport—when you become an adult, it's easier to go back to doing that sport than it is to do something new," Tara says. "I think that's why I've pushed my children to be athletic, so they can have something to go back to." Her seven-year-old just won a one-mile race, and her eleven-year-old daughter aims to run a half marathon and join Team Beef.

"I've inspired seven or eight different people that I know to start running," she says. "That's like, the coolest thing! I didn't think that I'd have that kind of influence over anybody."

A recent study, *Beef in an Optimal Lean Diet (BOLD)*, found that including lean beef daily is as effective at lowering cholesterol levels as traditional heart-healthy diets such as the DASH diet.



PROTEIN POWER

Lois East, Tom May, Nick Hayden, and Tara Cassidy are part of Missouri Beef Council's Team Beef.

CASEY BUCKMAN

To choose lean cuts of beef, look for “loin” or “round” in the name.



NICK HAYDEN

27, Columbia
Runs golf course operations at the Columbia Country Club
Events: 5ks and 10ks, Half Marathons, Half Ironmans, Full Marathons, Full Ironmans, and Ultra Marathons

NICK HAYDEN THRIVES ON ENCOURAGEMENT. A lifelong athlete, he was coaxed into Ironman triathalons by one of his best friends. They ran to stay healthy, increased their mileage, and then his friend suggested cycling. “Oh yes, I loved biking as a kid,” Nick thought, and he loved it just as much in college. “You need to go faster,” his friend said, and so Nick bought a road bike. His friend suggested he was a decent swimmer, and convinced him to sign up for a Half Ironman. “Not realizing what I was getting myself into, I agreed,” Nick says. “I had no idea the distances or challenges that lie in a race like this.” But it was too late to go back. He had already registered. Thinking, “I’m in over my head,” Nick worked out with an All-American swimmer and the university’s swim club. He dove headfirst into the race and, at six hours, beat his friend by forty-five minutes.

That was four years ago. Since then, Nick began noticing that everywhere he ran, people cheered for Team Beef. After asking around, he joined the team, and now people cheer for him. “If you’re running by yourself, it’s just like ‘uh,’” he says, mimicking defeat. At the St. Louis Rock n’ Roll Marathon this past fall, random spectators shouted, “Go Team Beef!” and every few miles musicians on the trail announced, “This is for you, Team Beef.” A stranger found Nick after the race and said, “Man, you’re a great runner. You motivated me and I kept up with you until mile ten. I wish I could buy a shirt.”

Nothing beats a steak... I love my wok; if I could take it everywhere I would have one in my bag.

The crimson jersey has become iconic at Missouri runs. “I’m very proud to have it and very proud to wear it,” Nick says. “I make sure it’s always in my bag.” Running for Team Beef has other benefits, including educational seminars and a \$100 stipend for entry fees. That’s about the price for a half marathon. Supporting beef came naturally to the twenty-seven-year-old. His family is from Wisconsin, where livestock rivals even Missouri’s ample cattle collection. And as for diet? Beef is indispensable. For lunch and dinner, beef is often on the table, sometimes from the grill, sometimes as fajitas. “Nothing beats a steak,” Nick says, adding, “I love my wok; if I could take it everywhere I would have one in my bag.”

Being a triathlete is “probably the best thing I need from a fitness standpoint: three disciplines, great cardio, and I have goals,” Nick says. He trains for two disciplines a day. This day was a six-mile run and a twenty-five-to-thirty-five-mile bike ride. He was considering swimming and working out at the gym for the next day. “A lot of people think I’m crazy as it is for what I do,” he says. “I just keep finding new adventures and seeing how far I can push my body.” He and his friend run most of their races together and have coaxed their families to support or join them on the course. Nick shares a quote from track star Steve Prefontaine: “To give anything less than your best is to sacrifice the gift.”



LOIS EAST

46, Clinton
Federal Loan Officer for USDA-Rural Development
Events: 5ks, 10ks, Half Marathons

WHEN LOIS EAST STARTED RUNNING almost three years ago, she never intended to like it. Attempts at a Couch-to-5k program came and went, until she had an epiphany that gaining more weight just wasn’t an option. The only resources she had were her training program and running shoes. “Frankly, I was too out of shape to deal with people,” she says. “Running is private, without pressure.” This time she stuck with it, replaced carbohydrates with protein, and made running a habit. “I went from thinking, ‘oh my gosh, this is miserable,’ to ‘it’s kind of like brushing your teeth, it’s one of those things you don’t think about, so you just do it,’” she says. She commemorated good runs and new records through Facebook and text messages, and friends bombarded her with positive feedback.

Knowing she would never run fast, Lois found she loved races “where simply finishing is really the key.” After the first half marathon she finally had fun and felt like a runner. “Crossing that finish line was a really empowering feeling. You feel like you can conquer the world.” She sings loudly, “I. Am. Awesome. In that moment!” As a mom in her mid-forties and in her career for more than two decades, Lois feels like those moments are rare. “You get to the point where you don’t often get tangible achievement rewards, and running is a place where I have really gotten that.”

My son, a thirteen-year-old boy, will claim that we are ‘meatitarian’.

Joining Team Beef was a natural choice. “I don’t know when there weren’t farmers in my family,” she says, laughing. “Yeah, pretty much back to the beginning of time.” She is happy to educate others about beef’s health benefits and loves getting recipes through the Missouri Beef Council’s website. The Easts raise their own beef, so they always have a freezer full of meat.

Though puzzled at first by her new running lifestyle, Lois’s family now assume she’ll keep a running bag at hand, leave before 6 AM to run, and cook nutritious meals that replace empty carbohydrates with protein. “When I look at a recipe, like taco soup or chili, I will typically double the meat in that, so that it’s more nutrient rich,” Lois says. “If we have spaghetti, there’s very little noodles. My son, a thirteen-year-old boy, will claim that we are ‘meatitarian’. One of the things that I have found, and my husband will certainly echo, is that increasing the protein helps you stay full longer, and the energy stays with you longer.”

Lois’s favorite thing about being a part of Team Beef, and running in general, is seeing people of all shapes, sizes and ages looking to achieve their personal goals. “In my mind, long distance runners look like the people you see on the Olympics: zero fat, you can see every muscle fiber on their being,” Lois says. “It’s actually all about completing it to your experience. It might not be about your time, but about how you feel at the end of the race.”

There are twenty-nine cuts of lean beef with less than 10 grams of total fat, 4.5 grams or less of saturated fat and less than 95 milligrams of cholesterol per 3.5 ounce serving.

Add lean ground beef to scrambled eggs along with sliced fresh peppers and onions to create a delicious omelet. Visit mobeef.org for more recipe suggestions!



TOM MAY

46, Columbia
Director of employee and public relations for MFA Oil
Events: 5ks, Half Marathons, Marathons

WHILE MOST COLUMBIANS SLEEP LIKE SLUGS, still and warm in the wee hours of the morning, an entire subculture is putting them to shame. Athletes run industrious paths through the city’s trails. Like ants. Even in mid-January. In 11.8-degree temperatures. About 30 runners gather at a trailhead, headlamps bobbing, dressed in such thin and sleek clothing to make even the best-dressed journalist look frumpy. Many have facemasks. They check in before running off. Each bad-weather run or first-place finish earns a bead, and after meeting twice a week, some runners enjoy fully bedazzled race lanyards by the end of each year. Every Tuesday and Thursday is like Mardi Gras.

Staying behind to sign in latecomers, one masked runner admits, “We were hoping the wind chill would be negative today so everyone could get a skull bead.” Already on the trail, probably secretly grateful there’s no skull bead today, runs Tom May, an original Team Beef member. At Beef Council-sponsored runs, you’re likely to meet him at the Team Beef booth, talking about what he loves: running and nutrition.

“It’s a fun way to promote a healthy lifestyle,” he says. “People think, ‘oh gosh, I can only eat skinless chicken,’ but there are all kinds of lean cuts that people enjoy.” That’s good news for a lot of people, and the questions come flooding in. Beginning and experienced athletes are interested in the nutrition side of a healthy lifestyle and want to know how beef can fit their diet. Tom emphasizes meat’s role in recovery and replenishment. He’s also thrilled to talk about supporting Missouri farmers. Although now a self-professed “city boy,” he raised small livestock as a kid in Sedalia, and his grandparents kept a few head of cattle. It’s a natural extension to his work in public relations with MFA Oil.

Socially, Team Beef has opened up a new world, including the daylight-running crowd. “These are everyday folks who are doing first-time things,” Tom says. He enjoys that aspect of it and encourages other people to find joy in running, asking, “How’s it coming? How are you training?” His positive influence has affected many fellow runners. When talking about the team, many members ask, “Have you talked to Tom May yet?” He is an ambassador inside and outside the community. When he starts a Team Beef spiel with friends, he says they joke with him, saying, “Okay, here we go, tell us about the twenty-nine cuts of lean beef.”

My absolute favorite thing after a race is going to Texas Roadhouse and ordering the biggest rib-eye steak they have in the place.

Tom keeps those cuts integrated in his diet on regular basis. “After running a half or full marathon, I’m looking for a reward,” he says. “My absolute favorite thing after a race is going to Texas Roadhouse and ordering the biggest rib-eye steak they have in the place. People laugh, because I’m a really skinny little guy, and they think, ‘how can you eat such a big piece of meat?’ It’s so flavorful! There is nothing more thrilling or satisfying than a big piece of meat after a long race.”



GLENDORIA ELLIOTT

50, Florissant
Biologist
Events: 5ks, Half Marathons, Marathons

GLENDORIA ELLIOTT LAUGHS WHEN SHE RECALLS how she got into running. It was her fourth year working at Washington University, and she would run six miles around Forest Park on her lunch break. “Running that long, you really should do a marathon,” someone told her. So she did—and found that races help support her community. She does benefit runs for scholarships, medical research, and charity. She says that “giving back to the community and running for folks who can’t run,” can get emotional during races such as Coleman’s run, a 5k to benefit autism awareness.

All we knew was hamburger and spaghetti, so I really do appreciate the menus, recipes, and health questions that I get off Facebook.

Bill Nash, her colleague in the university’s genome research lab, encouraged her to join him on Team Beef. He told her about how runners share their enthusiasm about healthy lifestyles and the social benefits of exercising with others. That sounded great to Glendoria, who had never ran with a team before. She has since learned about the benefits of beef. “All we knew was hamburger and spaghetti, so I really do appreciate the menus, recipes and health questions that I get off Facebook.”

The Missouri Beef Council helps by posting menus on its Facebook page, and anyone can visit for inspiration. “I see beautiful place settings and get all kinds of ideas from there,” Glendoria says. Her friends have even joined in.

She now volunteers at the Team Beef booth for sponsored events, offering food items and sharing information about lean beef. When fielding questions about high cholesterol and fat, she gently explains that those notions come from a lack of understanding. “Over the years that’s what we’ve been taught,” she says. “The lean part of the beef is healthier for you, and after a race, it just gives you that energy and restores your body.”

Having worked in a genetics lab, she also recognizes the importance of finding a diet that works for individuals. “Health history does boil down to family traditions, what we eat, and how we’re eating,” she says. “If you want to live longer, you have to go out and find the right foods.” She goes directly to the meat market to get her perfect cuts.

Turning fifty in April, Glendoria is working closely with her doctor on diet and exercise to keep hormones in check. She now eats regimens of small, vegetable-based meals with lean beef on the side. “I’ve been running a lot lately,” she says. It helps with stress relief, and it also helps her husband keep his diabetes under control. “We don’t eat any fried foods or soda and all that,” she says. “No, we bake everything. It’s so important to stay healthy and positive, especially with all that’s going on in my life.” Fortunately for Glendoria, Team Beef is standing by to make some of those challenges a little bit easier.

For more beef bits on nutrition, recipes, and health, visit mobeef.org!

