

## ***DENNIS CUNNINGHAM – 2024 MRA RACE DIRECTOR OF THE YEAR***

Dennis started running in 2012 at the tender age of 46 as an experiment in active commuting that continues to this day.

The very first race he entered was a hot 10km held in August that year. He was hooked and began signing up for any race he came across. He took a 1/2 marathon running clinic organized out of the Grant Park Stride Ahead Running Store leading to him joining the Road Kill Run Club.

In 2014 Dennis ran in the Twin Cities Marathon finishing with a PB of 3:15:02, a BQ qualifying time. He ran the Boston Marathon in 2016 and 2017. In both instances he learned a lot about perseverance and gratitude.

All told Dennis has run 20+ half marathons, 7 full marathons, too many 5 and 10kms, and lots of trail runs including two 50km ultra marathons. He has slowed down a bit and doesn't enter as many races as he used to but still loves to run.

Dennis got involved in race directing specifically because of all the positive running event experiences he had and out of a desire to give back to and build up our vibrant run community.

He has been Race Director of the Frost Bite River Run since 2014. Held in January, it's a unique event featuring out-and-back five mile and five-kilometer distances starting at the Riverview Community Centre, taking runners on to the Nestaweya River Trail.

Over the last 12 years the run has raised over \$30,000 for the Riverview Community Centre. Dennis is especially proud of the "good neighbour" vibe the Frost Bite River Run has come to be known by. Much like Riverview itself, the run is a real gem.

Year over year, Dennis does his best to ensure that runners enjoy a highly positive experience complete with medals, lots of draw prizes, a tasty post-run chili lunch, enthusiastic volunteers, and supportive sponsors. The Frost Bite River Run is the perfect way to kick off the race season. Dennis is especially proud of the fact that many runners return year after year, telling him that the Frost Bite River Run is their favourite event.

Dennis has also been deeply involved with the Churchill Parkway Parkrun. He was one of five Winnipeggers instrumental in bringing Parkrun to the city in July of 2019. Since that time Dennis and other dedicated volunteers have held 186 (and counting) Parkruns! Dennis has volunteered over 180 times.

If you are unfamiliar with Parkrun, it is a global collection of timed 5-kilometer events for runners, walkers and volunteers that take place every Saturday morning at more than 2,000 locations in 23 countries across five continents that began in the UK over 20 years ago. There are over 40 Parkruns in cities and towns across Canada.

The Churchill Parkway Parkrun is the only one in Manitoba. It has hosted runners from all over the world. If you haven't run a Parkrun yet, you should drop by the Churchill Parkway start area at 8:55 on any Saturday morning. The community is welcoming, and the route is beautiful.

Aside from race directing, Dennis is an active volunteer in Riverview, coordinating and cooking at an annual fall supper for 150 neighbours, grooming cross country ski trails along the Churchill Parkway in the winter, and teaching indoor bouldering outside of his day job.