



3 Minute Interview: American Odyssey Relay founder Bob Fleshner

By Bill Myers | Jan 8, 2009

Bob Fleshner, 53, is a former health care executive who became a personal trainer and founder of the American Odyssey Relay, a 200-mile race from Gettysburg, Pa., to West Potomac Park. A portion of the proceeds will go to the Wellness Community, a Washington-area charity that helps cancer patients and their families.

Why did you start it?

I ran in three of these relays with my relay team and never had so much fun. It was a complete blast.

How long did it take you to get this organized?

It takes a while to get all the permitting and stuff in place. But we spaced it out by about 18 months because we wanted to make sure we did it really right.

When does it kick off officially?

April 24. It starts that morning at Gettysburg. It's a 200-mile, straight-through-the-night-event. So far we've signed up a little under 1,000 people. We'll cap it at 1,800.

Why did you get into personal training?

I've been into the fitness business for almost 30 years. I was before this an executive at United Health Care and I felt that the entire health care industry was turned upside down. It was focused on paying for people after they got sick. There was no focus on prevention and health. They'd say, "We'll pay if you get sick, but we're not going to pay for gym membership." I think that's upside down.

Are you glad you did it?

Absolutely. I wake up every morning just incredibly thrilled with what I'm doing. My wife will call down and say, "Why are you still working?" I don't look at it at work. It's just a blast.

What's your best moment in a relay?

It would have to be running over the Golden Gate Bridge at 2 o'clock in the morning under a full moon.