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Runners across the country tell how beef is their fuel for the finish.

by **Bridget Beran**

All across the country, runners are donning bright red Team Beef jerseys and showing America how beef is a part of a healthy, active lifestyle.

“We have a problem with people not relating beef to being healthy,” says Daren Williams, National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA) communications executive director. “We knew we could make great strides with athletes promoting beef as part of a healthy diet.”

Team Beef members participate in 5K and 10K races, half and full marathons, and triathlons. With races gaining popularity for charities and athletes alike, NCBA staff saw this as a perfect

opportunity to spread the word about how beef could be a part of a healthy diet and active lifestyle. Williams says team members can do any type of race they choose to help raise awareness for beef.

For Williams, the beginnings of Team Beef were partially linked to his personal mission to get in shape. Recalling how heavy he was before he decided to get in shape, Williams says, “I knew I needed to do something. I needed to change my life for my own health.”

Confronted with a public outlook on beef as not being a healthy choice for an athletic lifestyle, NCBA staff

decided having a team of athletes to share beef’s story was the best solution. Jaime Hanson, Comfrey, Minn., focuses on the “ZIP” aspect when promoting beef at races.

“You get zinc, iron and protein (“ZIP”) all in one package,” Hanson says. “Protein is important to keep your body fueled and we think beef is a great source for that.”

Hanson became involved with Nebraska’s Team Beef runners after applying for a Nebraska Cattlemen internship three years ago.

Meghan Mueseler first heard about Team Beef through a co-worker at Cargill Meat Solutions. A former National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) member, Mueseler says her interest was immediately piqued. She joined Team Beef USA and then joined Kansas Team Beef after it was established.

“What’s a better billboard for the beef industry than a steak on a grill on the back and front of jerseys running the streets of some of the largest cities in the U.S.?” she says.

Team members like Mueseler answer questions about how beef provides fuel for a runner. She says her favorite way of answering is to say that there are 26 lean cuts of

beef that are actually considered leaner than a chicken breast.

“An athlete needs protein to fuel and refuel and what better way than with a lean cut of beef?” she adds.

Hanson, a former NJHA director, already had a passion for advocating for beef, and running for Nebraska’s Team Beef helped her tell that story.

“It was something I really believed and now it’s a habit and it’s a great stress reliever,” Hanson says. “It’s for a good cause and beef is something that’s really important to me.”

Finding the team to be something she could get on board with, preparing for the Lincoln National Guard half marathon was Hanson’s next challenge.





Katie (left) and Jan Frenzen get ready to run the 2014 Lincoln National Guard Marathon. A long-time runner, Katie encouraged her mother to join Nebraska Team Beef. Jan says she joined to prove to her three daughters that working hard and achieving a goal is possible at any age.

Ready to run

Training for the May 2014 race began all the way back in the prior fall for Hanson, who says she started out training by focusing on strength training before moving to a cardio-heavy workout in February. Hanson advises taking training slowly and building up endurance one mile at a time.

“It was a good way to kick myself in the butt and get in shape,” Hanson laughs. “It’s one of those things, like for me I wasn’t a long distance runner growing up so it’s more of a mental challenge. You’ve got to build your whole body up. You have to cross train, biking, swimming, so you become an all-around athlete.”

However Mueseler says there’s no fitness level required to join Team Beef, and that’s one of the things she loves about it. No matter a runner’s athletic ability, everyone is invited to join the running advocates. While she



Heath Larson, Wichita, Kan., of Team Beef-Kansas shows off his beef pride at the 2014 Boston Marathon.

says there’s no six-minute mile in her future, Mueseler says she still enjoys the competitive side of the race.

“I think as for many runners and former members of NJHA, we like competition,” Mueseler says. “We thrive on the dedication it takes to reach our goal.”

Even after recovering from a foot surgery, Mueseler has run half marathons and triathlons all across the U.S. However, she still says her favorite race is the Brew to Brew — a 43.1-mile relay race stretching from Kansas City to Lawrence, Kan.

“The past several years we have had a six to 10 person team — all sporting the Team Beef jersey,” she says. “It is a great way to connect with those across the state who all have a passion for the power of beef!”

This year was Hanson’s third time running the Lincoln National Guard half marathon, along with several smaller 5Ks throughout the year. During this time, she’s been able to reach out to many other runners and to help spread the word about beef.

“While you’re running along the track, it’s a good conversation starter,” Hanson explains. “We describe how we’re raising awareness and how beef can help fuel you as an athlete.”

Join a team

For many states, the state beef council is in charge of coordinating its individual Team Beef. Some states, such as New York, will buy a new team member’s jersey to encourage people to join Team Beef. In other states, the number of team members is limited because the team helps fund the races the team participates in. Across the country, there are 14 state beef council teams. Joining a team is different from state to state, but the purpose is always the same.

People wishing to represent beef in an active lifestyle in states without an established Team Beef or in states where the team is full can join Team Beef USA, which serves as a national

unifier for all the teams and individual members of Team Beef.

To join Team Beef USA, all a person has to do is “like” Team Beef USA on Facebook, get a jersey and start running. Williams says the team is free to anyone who is interested in promoting beef as part of a healthy diet.

Team Beef got a running start at the Chicago half marathon. The race coincided with the National Beef Cook-off. A group of NCBA employees, including Williams, kicked off the team by running in the half marathon while representing beef.

After presenting the concept to their state beef councils, teams from Texas and New York really ran with

it. Williams attended the Boilermaker 15K and 5K road races with Team Beef-New York. Not long after its conception, New York’s team had already acquired more than 100 members to run the Boilermaker.

“The spectators along the sidelines noticed. The other runners noticed,” Williams says. “You’d be

running along and hear ‘Go Beef!’ out of the crowd. It makes an impression.”

These runners represent beef all across the country, spreading the word about the great benefits beef has for an athlete and showing how it is an ideal part of a healthy diet.

“Team Beef is truly a unique advocacy group because you don’t have to live on a farm or be actively engaged in ranching,” Mueseler says. “You simply need a passion for the power of protein found in beef!” **HW**



Meghan Mueseler celebrates finishing the 2013 San Antonio Rock and Roll Half Marathon in San Antonio.



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