



## When training isn't enough

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**GateHouse News Service**

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Natick — Training for the Boston Marathon takes quite a toll on the body, and many runners suffer injuries along the way, but one Natick clinic has helped athletes get back on the road to Boston.

The Performance Health Clinic offers both chiropractic help and a method of loosening stressed muscles called Active Release Techniques, or ART. The clinic is run by Bradley Weiss, a chiropractic physician and certified ART therapist.

One such runner who benefited from the help of the clinic is Kevin Dunn, a 39-year old running his first marathon this year. The Hopkinton resident began training in December and had built up to 20-mile runs, but just 10 days before the big day his knee began hurting so much he could not finish his training run.

The disappointment that he came so far but would not be able to run the marathon practically haunted Dunn, who is a member of the Hopkinton Athletic Association.

"You can order a (Boston Marathon) jacket if you finish, and being the first one, I ordered my jacket," Dunn said. "I had a nightmare that one of the race officials called up and said `You have to give your jacket back since you didn't run the race.'"

Dunn worked with a physical therapist, but was told he should stop running to let his knee recover. He told his running buddies he would not be able to run the race.

"I talked to someone to ask what I could do, and they sent e-mail to 10 experienced runners," Dunn said. "Three out of 10 responded I should go to see Dr. Weiss."

Although the pain was in his knee, Dunn would learn the cause of the discomfort was not in his knee; it was due to tight muscles in his thigh and hips, as well as one in his back which was irritating a nerve. Dunn went in for a 45-minute appointment, which ART work, and came out ready to run.

"(ART) wasn't unbearably painful, but there is some stress on the muscles," Dunn said. "The next day I was a little bit sore. Within a couple of days everything felt fine. (ART) is not same as a massage."

Weiss demonstrated ART on his colleague and fellow chiropractic physician Victoria VanNederynen. After finding a muscle that remains tensed up after when it should be relaxed, Weiss puts pressure on the muscle and elongates it.

Weiss described the tensed muscles like a child who has fallen off a horse and does not want to get back on.

"The muscle gets injured and then it shortens and does not want to let go," Weiss said. "Active Release Techniques breaks through the scar tissue and allows the muscle to relax."

Runner Arnie Pollinger, a Holliston resident and president of the Greater Framingham Track Club, goes in for regular ART sessions with Weiss and VanNederynen.

"It can be very painful, but it is well worth it," Pollinger said.

Weiss said he and VanNederynen are two of only about a dozen people in the state certified to use ART.

Performance Health Center also offers help from massage therapists and nutritionists, Weiss said. The clinic is working with about 30 runners competing in the Boston Marathon this year, ranging from those running for a cause to elite runners.

Aside from visits to a chiropractor or ART therapist, runners can do things at home to prevent injuries. Pollinger said he relies on ice baths after long runs to keep his muscles from aching.

"I put two, five-pound bags of ice in the tub and fill it up so it covers my knees," said Pollinger, who will run his sixth marathon this week. "I scream when I get in, but it really works. The next day I do not feel much pain."

VanNederynen, who is training for her first marathon and will raise money for the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, said ice is ideal, to soothe muscles. She said stretching also prevents injuries.

"I recommend, before training, to have people stretch properly," VanNederynen said. "And icing — ice is everybody's friend."

After his visit to the clinic, Dunn wondered if he should rest his knee, but was told he could start running again right away.

"I tested it out with a five-mile run," Dunn said. "It felt fine."

Dunn said he will take more precautions to prevent future injuries.

"The lesson I learned, is training for a marathon is tough, and you need to do a little preventative work," he said. "You need to stay loose and do a lot of stretching."

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