



## Edward Fitzpatrick

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### 14 marathons, one major health scare in this runner's life

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At first, I thought the runner had tripped on the sidewalk. But when he rolled over, his eyes were fixed and dilated.



I'd met Jim Silveria a month earlier at a workout with the Ronald McDonald House of Providence Running Club. We were about the same age, were fathers of young boys and had both displayed the poor judgment required to take part in a 100-mile relay race in Vermont. I told him if he enjoyed that race, June's 220-mile relay through all six New England state would be twice as fun.

He immediately saw the logic, signed up and began joining other relay team members for Wednesday runs with the Wild Colonial Running Club. On March 16, we left from the Rhode Runner store on a 7-mile run in Providence. A mile in, he veered to the side of Governor Street and collapsed.

He appeared to be having a seizure. He took gasping, irregular breaths. Before long, the 39-year-old Barrington father of three — a runner who had completed 14 marathons and was aiming to run marathons in all 50 states, a guy who ate hummus on wheat bread — had no pulse.

At 7 p.m. on Thursday, a cardiologist who specializes in the relationship between exercise and heart disease will give a talk on "Sudden Cardiac Failure in Athletes" at La Salle High School's Brother Michael McKenery Theatre, in Providence. The event, sponsored by the Ronald McDonald House of Providence and its running club, is free and open to the public.

Dr. Paul D. Thompson, director of The Athletes' Heart Program at Hartford Hospital and a former Brown University faculty member, will talk about how exercise is like the stock market: You run and invest to realize long-term gain, but the market can crash and your risk of sudden cardiac death spikes while running.

"Don't assume exercise is a panacea," Thompson said. "A lot of people exercise, and don't do anything else to take care of themselves." Stay fit but also eat right, don't ignore symptoms, consult your doctor and take cholesterol-lowering drugs if you need them, he said.

Among those attending Thursday's event will be James J. "Jim" Doyle, the Bishop Hendricken High School cross-country coach whose brother, Rhode Island running legend Robert "Bobby" Doyle, died of a heart attack in 2007 at age 58.

Jim Doyle, 63, an accomplished runner himself, said their father died of a heart attack at age 45, but he and his brother had a "false sense of security" because they ran and didn't smoke, as their father had. A 2002 test revealed Jim Doyle had 100-percent blockage of his left anterior descending artery, and he had bypass surgery. "Check your family tree," Doyle said.

Also attending Thursday's event will be Silveria, who was lucky enough to have a heart attack with a doctor and a nurse running behind him. Dr. Paul Morrissey and nurse Kellie Armstrong administered cardio-pulmonary resuscitation until paramedics arrived. After nine days in the hospital, Silveria returned home.

Silveria, information technology director at the public defender's office, said a coronary artery was 80 percent blocked. Four years ago, he'd been told his cholesterol was a bit high, but he was feeling fine. "This was completely unexpected," he said. He hopes to run again: He's buying a Road ID tag with emergency information and the words: "Fairly indestructible, so far."

[efitzpat@projo.com](mailto:efitzpat@projo.com)