

## SPORTS

## Running-boom icon Sheehan gets a statue at CBA

**Jerry Carino**

Asbury Park Press

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It's a ubiquitous sight in neighborhoods and parks, along boardwalks and roadsides, on tracks and treadmills – people running for fitness purposes. Chances are, you hardly even notice them.

Prior to the 1970s, this sight did not exist. If someone was running in public, they were probably a high school or college athlete in training. Or they were being chased.

A small handful of people ignited the “running boom” that continues today. One of them was George Sheehan, a Jersey Shore cardiologist and author who co-founded Christian Brothers Academy in 1959. On Sunday the school ac-

corded him the ultimate honor, unveiling a life-sized statue on its campus. Sheehan is depicted running, of course. It's the work of Toms River-based Brian Hanlon, a former runner at Monmouth University who is one of the nation's leading sculptors.

“I love it,” said Michael Sheehan, one of George's sons and a Red Bank resident. “He has his Manhattan Jasper (college) singlet on. The focus on his face is perfect. You can see he's in deep thought. That was his message – the mind-body connection.”

**'Who's that crazy man?'**

Sheehan was a good college runner who later, while living in Rumson,

**See SHEEHAN, Page 3B****Sheehan**

Continued from Page 1B

returned to the sport in middle age. That was unheard of at the time.

“In the 1950s and early 60s, nobody continued running after college,” said Tim McLoone, girls cross country and track coach at Rumson-Fair Haven High School and a longtime friend of the Sheehan family. “It was, ‘Who's that crazy man running down the street?’”

A confluence of events launched the running boom: American Frank Shorter won the 1972 Olympic marathon, author Jim Fixx published the blockbuster



**George Sheehan, shown in 1993, co-founded CBA in 1959.**

FILE PHOTO

how-to tome “The Complete Book of Running,” and Sheehan spread the word through a canon of writing – bestselling books, pieces in Runner's World magazine and a regular column in the Asbury Park Press.

“He was the literate part of the movement,” McLoone said. “Jim Fixx was giving out the nuts and bolts about how to train and what shoes to wear; George was the

philosopher. It's great that legacy is being honored.”



**A statue of running-boom icon George Sheehan is unveiled at Christian Brothers Academy as son Tim Sheehan speaks. LARRY LEVANTI/CBA**

**A timeless message**

George Sheehan died in 1993 at age 74, but he lived long enough to see Christian Brothers become a distance-running colossus. Last month the Colts' cross country team captured a 25th NJSIAA Meet of Champions crown and won the Nike Northeast Regional before placing 18th at Saturday's national championship in Oregon.

“The dedication of this statue by a runner, for a runner, at a school of runners, is really cool,” CBA cross country coach Sean McCafferty said.

It's also a signpost of sorts for a state-of-the-art track & field complex on the campus, also named after Sheehan, that

is being finished up now and will debut this spring. Near the statue is a plaque with a handful of Sheehan's most well-known quotes.

One of them – “success means having the courage, the determination, and the will to become the person you believe you were meant to be” – has become a core tenet of McCafferty's program.

“It's something I preach to the boys all the time: It's not about winning or losing, but using running as a vehicle to become a better version of yourself,” the coach said. “I think that's something George would be very proud of.”

*Jerry Carino has covered the New Jersey sports scene since 1996.*