

The CLCF Cross Country Program was started by Will Speck in the fall of 2000. There were twelve participants in the first season which ran for 10 weeks from 5:00pm to 6:00pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays and from 4:00pm to 5:00pm on Saturdays. The runners met at three different locations: the Temple to Music at Roger Williams Park during selected weekdays for practice, Belmont Park along the Pawtuxet River off Elmwood Avenue just over the Cranston line in Warwick and Cranston High School West for both weekday practices and Saturday races.

Coach Will designed a program to help encourage participants to become stronger and faster runners through regular training. Runners were expected to come to all practices and meets, and to show a good effort even at those times when they were tired. Most importantly, each runner was expected to treat all other runners and coaches with respect, and demonstrate good sportsmanship.

The program was initially offered to children in grades three through eight; runners of all abilities were welcome and everyone made the team. Coach Will, a top marathoner in his younger days with three top 20 finishes in the Boston Marathon, tailored the program for young runners introducing them to the basic elements of cross country training. He kept the young runners engaged with training routines on "Mr. Hill" next to the Temple to Music, and concluded each practice with relay races. And late in each season, Coach Will would hold "The Big Chance", a race in which the faster runners would give the slower runners a head start, the amount of time for each head start based on past performance.

After Coach Will's unexpected passing in the spring of 2003, assistant coach Tom Aman (Will's college teammate at Providence College and co-chair with Coach Will of the CLCF Track program) assumed the role of head coach. With the support of many parents and the help of volunteer coaches, including longtime assistant coaches Janice Cataldo and Greg Bachand, Coach Tom retained the same ten week format and approach. In memory of Coach Will, CLCF hosted an annual Will Speck Invitational the first Saturday in October inviting runners from various area youth running clubs, such as the Providence Cobras, the Sentinel Striders (based in Smithfield), and North Kingstown Recreation Running Club.

By 2005, the number of participants increased to 40. Eventually the program added outside events to its schedule for those runners interested in more competitive running: youth races at the Providence Downtown 5k, the Middle School races at the Ocean State Invitational at Goddard Park (a nice opportunity for Cranston Middle School students to run in a race during the years that the City of Cranston suspended funding for Middle School sports, and the Campopiano Middle School Invitational, hosted by the Sentinel Striders who graciously invited all of the younger CLCF runners, regardless of grade, to run in the 6th grade race. Later CLCF runners interested in the Junior Olympics began to extend their training into November with the Sentinels or practice on their own to compete in United States Track and Field (USATF) events around the country.

After the "Great Flood" in the spring of 2010, the fields, fencing and asphalt paths in Belmont Park along the Pawtuxet were damaged and the location was unusable. For the fall 2010

season the third location was changed from Belmont Park to the John H Chafee Athletic Complex on Hope Road which continues as a site today for practices and races.

In 2016, Assistant Coach Ken Horn, with the help of Coach Steve Johnson, established CLCF's own cross country racing team, extending training into November and December for those CLCF runners wanting to compete in USATF regional and national Junior Olympics races. By then, CLCF had become a USATF registered club for its Track and Field program and Cross Country began USATF participation as well. In 2017, the CLCF Boys 8 and Under Team finished 5th out of 15 teams participating in the USATF National Cross Country Championships in Tallahassee, Florida.

In 2018, Steve and Melendy Johnson took over from Tom Aman as co-chairs and head coaches and oversaw the program through three seasons, including the challenging 2020 pandemic season. During their tenure, the number of participants continued to increase and the racing team added events to its schedule; the program discontinued its use of Roger Williams Park and added Western Hills Middle School and the grounds at the CLCF Building on Pontiac Avenue as practice and race locations.

In coordination with one of the coaches, Greg Brennicks, the Tom Aman Ekiden Race was created during the pandemic. An Ekiden race is a 5 person relay race with some of the legs running different distances. The initial race had over 50 participants from three teams-Cumberland Surge, Sentinel Striders, and of course CLCF. Gatorade provided free bottles of their product to all the participants, which was a nice addition to the meet.

In 2021, Frank Notarianni, the longtime chair and head coach of the CLCF Track and Field program, added Cross Country to his leadership roles with CLCF.