

LET'S GO, SKOKIE!

# Skokie Swifters

RUNNING. WALKING. COMMUNITY.

by Maike van Wijk

**IF YOU'VE VISITED SKOKIE'S** Sketchbook Brewing Company on a Tuesday night, it's likely you've run into a Swifter gathering. And no, we are not talking about a group of local Taylor Swift fans — we're referring to members of the Skokie Swifters Run/Walk Club, a local-born initiative that has been making waves in the community since 2021.

The club, founded by born-and-raised Skokie resident Sabrina Ehmke, has become known over the last few years as much for its outdoor fitness appeal as it is for its tremendous community impact. Since the club's inception, the Swifters have raised more than \$10,000 to benefit nonprofit organizations like the Niles Township Food Pantry and local schools in need of supplies for their students.

Captain Swifter Sabrina (who is also a certified running coach) emphasizes that community really is the name of the game as a Swifter, and interest in training for marathons is absolutely not required. Everyone from beginners to kids in strollers to seasoned runners is welcome to join the club, and membership is free with no attendance requirement — a benefit appreciated by Skokie resident Denise Chaitkin, a self-described “on-again-off-again runner/walker/not-coming-at-all person.” Members also enjoy the built-in



social network the club provides, with many Swifters attending local festivities and celebrating milestones together.

While the “Tuesday Trails” group always meets up at 6pm at Sketchbook Skokie, the 8am “Saturday Scampers” rotate meeting places, with Soul Good Coffee and Kneads & Wants Artisan Bakery as frequent gathering points. After logging their hard-earned steps during a run/walk, Swifters will also often pop up at local eateries, the Skokie Farmer's Market, and other community events.

The Swifters are more than happy to help their more serious runner comrades prepare for the many different races that take place throughout the year, with the Bank of America Shamrock Shuffle in spring kicking off the local six-race season and the Lincolnwood Turkey Trot concluding it just after Thanksgiving. In mid-November, twenty-two Swifters will travel to Savannah, Georgia for the Every Woman's Marathon — a woman-created event that unites runners of all levels, abilities, and backgrounds.

“

The comradery in the group has reinvigorated me.

— Swifter Mark, a 16-year runner



The Skokie Swifters group has exploded in growth since their first run/walk in September 2021 — now boasting over 400 members.

At the end of the day (or a few miles), any Swifter will tell you that their beloved group is just as much about running/walking as it is about being part of a supportive and community-minded group. “Before I joined the Swifters, I didn't do a ton in Skokie,” says original member Terrence Wilson. “Now I feel like I'm part of the community more than I ever have before.”

To learn more about the Skokie Swifters and to join your first run/walk, visit [www.skokieswifters.run](http://www.skokieswifters.run).