Mention cross-country and Gary Kowalewski's face lights up.

In August, the youngest Kowalewski daughter, Kori, joined the Swede harrier team and three other siblings who compete in the sport.

"It's really nice, it cuts down on travel and covers all activities for a week," Gary said with a laugh.

A button with a photograph of all four of the Kowalewski children pinned to his chest, he said he didn't think cross country was very interesting until his oldest daughter, Morgan, who's now a senior, decided to lace up her running shoes the fall of her seventh-grade year.

"Then we kind of got into it," Gary said about he and his wife, Karen. "It's really interesting plus it gives us exercise."

During meets, girls run about 2.5 miles while the boys tackle 3.1-mile runs. Junior high students, who train with the high school team, compete for a mile on courses throughout Nebraska.

Spectators position themselves on either side of painted lines to cheer on participants, often running to several places on the course.

All three of the Kowalewski sisters decided to go out for cross country because they weren't keen on volleyball.

FOUR SIBLINGS UNCOMMON

The likelihood of four siblings on the same team isn't very high, according to cross-country coach Steve Reeves.

That's because most high school teams don't include junior high students as do many cross-country teams across the state.

During his 32 years of coaching both girls and boys cross country, Reeves said he's never had four children from the same family on the team such as the Kowalewskis.

Interestingly, three Martinez siblings were also on the team this year—Bryan, Mathiel and Jackie—but they moved to Texas this week.

Having that many siblings on the same team is fun for parents, Reeves said, because they don't have to travel to different activities.

"They're super kids and family and they have a tremendous work ethic," he said about the Kowalewskis.

Reeves added that cross country offers an opportunity for kids to become close because everyone participates.

"They don't stand on the sidelines and there's a lot of interaction between teammates and with people from other teams," he said. "They root for each other during meets, ride the bus and work out together. It's a learning experience for all age groups."

[redacted]