

This Mother

“I just want to have others catch my passion for how it feels to be fit and healthy.”

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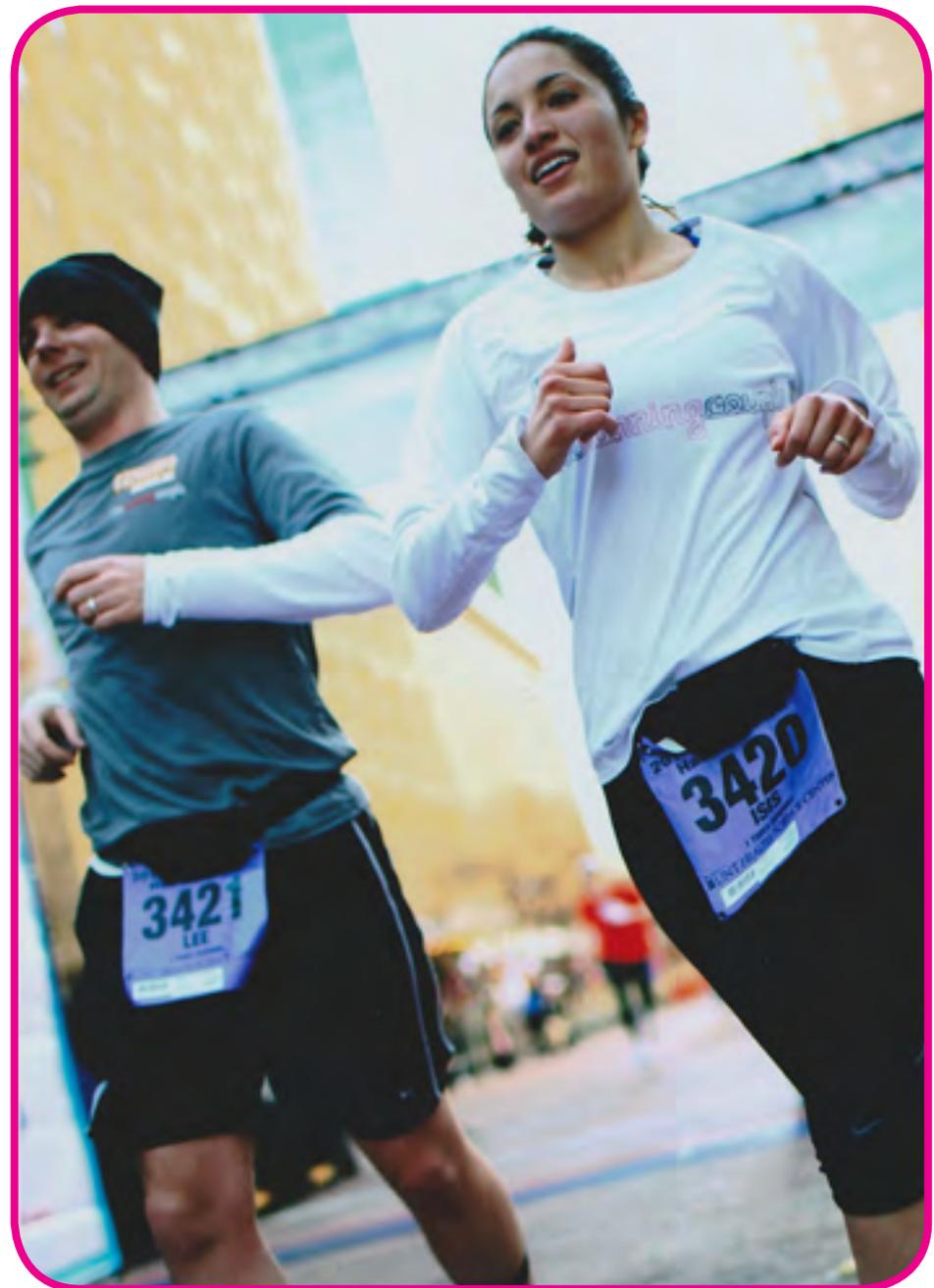
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Set Goals Like a Mother

2010 has ended and, most of us will start to reflect on our accomplishments (and maybe shortfalls) from the past year. As we look to the future, it is time to develop our 2011 New Year's Resolutions! As a runner, I always like to set goals and have included some ideas for your list.

- **Run for a cause:** I can't think of a more rewarding goal than this. There are thousands of organizations out there that would love to have you help raise awareness for their cause. Some of our favorite races are the **Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure®** and the National MS Society's **Walk MS** and **Bike MS**.
- **Volunteer for a race:** I think that every runner needs to experience the other side of the race. Race organizers and volunteers do a TON to make sure you have a great experience. Take a little time and give back.
- **Introduce someone to running:** Inspire someone else to take up running. You can usually do this without even trying. Just speaking to your friends about the benefits and joys of running can be motivational fuel.
- **Make it social:** Get out there and meet fellow runners. Join a running club or head out to a "Tweet Up" for runners. The bigger your running network grows, the more you will learn about the sport and the better runner you will become by training with others. Fellow runners can also share their favorite products and give you the motivation uplift you need when hitting a low point in your training regime. Better yet, get your family involved...it works for *The Running Couple!*
- **Set a PR:** 'Nough said. Nothing like breaking your previous records to feel a sense of accomplishment in 2011.



- **Injury-proof your body:** This is a big one for me this year. I haven't had an injury that has taken me out of running yet, but I have seen a lot of my friends go on the IR this year. I plan to really strengthen any weak spots and insert a higher level of cross-training in my training plan. Wouldn't everyone like to make it through 2011 with no injuries
- **Switch it up:** Running one race length over and over can get boring. Add a little variety this year by switching up the distance or terrain. You could even sign up for a bike event or triathlon!
- **Enter a race at a dream location:** What better motivation than running a race at a dream location? Not only do you get to accomplish a resolution, but you get your reward instantly! I am already jealous of some of our fellow runners as they are jetting to Greece in 2011 to complete the 2500th anniversary of the Athens Marathon. Maybe we will tag along...
- **Take up yoga:** I know, I know...yoga is for girls right? WRONG! Not only does yoga help increase flexibility, it can also reduce soreness and help speed up recovery. *Here* is a great sequence of yoga poses from Runner's World to help you increase your flexibility in 2011.
- **Better nutrition:** You are only as good as the food you ingest, so take care in selecting your diet for 2011. This resolution can span all activities of running. Nutrition decisions for runners include hydration, electrolyte replacement, eating for recovery, fueling up for your race, etc. A great idea is to keep a diary of foods that you consume and the corresponding performance of your following runs. Experiment and try new things...you just might find your new favorite.

That's it. Get out there and start planning for a great 2011!



The Running Couple started in November of 2009. The blog came about as we were preparing to race the San Antonio Rock n' Roll Marathon and just wanted to inform our friends and family about our progress and accomplishments. We were surprised to see the amount of support we got from not only our friends and family but also from our contacts we met through Twitter and Facebook. We enjoy sharing our knowledge and creating a place for all runners (novice, intermediate, advanced) to communicate and share ideas.

Isis Hargrave is a graduate of the University of Texas at Arlington with a degree in Public Relations. She works at lululemon athletica as an Assistant Manager of the Fort Worth Showroom and Athletes HoneyMilk as Social Media Specialist. Running was not something she initially loved to do but after seeing Lee complete the Chicago Marathon in 2010, she was inspired. Lee agreed to coach her and after 2 years of mustering up the courage to run a half marathon, she began her running career on November 15, 2009. Isis and Lee crossed the finish line of the Chicago Marathon 4 years after the race that inspired her to run in the first place, with the man she loved and 6 weeks pregnant!

Lee Hargrave is a perpetual student with degrees from the University of Illinois (B.S. in Aeronautical Engineering), University of Texas (M.S. in Mechanical Engineering), and Indiana University (MBA). He is currently employed as a Program Manager for Parker Aerospace and a Social Media Specialist for Athletes HoneyMilk. Running has always been a part of Lee's life...whether he was competing in a track meet or chasing down cows on his family farm. After running the 2006 Chicago Marathon, Lee caught the endurance bug and convinced Isis she could do the same. Four years later they were crossing the Chicago Marathon finish line together. In 2011, Lee is looking forward to completing the Goofy Challenge, his first 50-miler (Rocky Raccoon), and becoming a father.



Run Like You're 4

You can learn a lot from your kid's fun run, more than you might expect.

The thing about kids is that everything just is what it is. They don't care about times or finishing places, wicking fabrics or fancy watches that can tell you your pace, distance, heart rate and color of your underwear. They're not concerned with race strategy, weather conditions, or the type of course they're on. They just run for (dare I say it?) fun. And you can see it by the ear to ear grin on their precious little faces.

My daughter, after cheering me on at a number of races, had been BEGGING me to run one herself. Now she'd done a few tot trots in the past, and even the one mile fun run with the family on Thanksgiving in Detroit a couple of times, which is fast becoming somewhat of a family tradition. But this was different. This was the first time SHE asked to do a race as opposed to me entering her on my own, then convincing her there was fun to be had by running it. This was HER race.

So, I got her a little running outfit and some real running shoes, pink and sparkly. (She needed a new pair of sneakers anyway, so why not make them conducive to running?) And last week, we even went and practiced at her request (as if the child needed to practice something she pretty much does all day, everyday even when we don't go outside, and it's only in circles around our living room). Saturday was the big race. The Wood Duck Dash 1/2 Mile Fun Run. Her 5 year old cousin would be running too.

And let me tell you, it's amazing the things these kiddos picked up on from their running parents, without anybody ever really discussing it with them. Over at my nephew's house,

"Everybody who crosses the finish line wins."

his biggest concerns on race day were that he didn't have a fuel belt and his shoes would be too heavy or not right for running, so he brought a couple of pairs just in case. While at my house, my daughter opened the refrigerator looking for noodles for breakfast because "that's what runners eat before they run." (She doesn't get up at 4:30AM to see what I actually eat before I run, so her best guess is what I eat the night before). I hadn't prepped any noodles for breakfast, so I told her eggs had protein, berries have antioxidants, and bananas have potassium; all things runners needed to run fast. She didn't know what any of those words were, but it sounded big, grown up and fancy enough to completely satisfy her. She happily ate every bite.

The race was scheduled to start at 9AM which I knew because I checked AGAIN the night before on the registration form to be sure AND that is also exactly what it said on the big giant sign outside of the park. 9AM. Really. I have witnesses. So we had planned on being there at 8:30 to get her bib, and let her warm up a little.

But apparently by 9AM start, they meant 8:40 AM because obviously when you set a start time for an event, as everyone knows, you actually mean for it begin 20 minutes earlier which is certainly not a problem at all for an event which involves getting kids ready and all that - that entails. No. Not all. (Is your computer screen dripping with sarcasm yet?)

So as we neared the park, I got a frantic phone call from my mom. “They are starting in 10 minutes!” A little back up at the park entrance, followed by weaving through the park to get to the right area, and I soon found myself booking to the starting line with my 4 year old right past the announcer who was now down to giving us a 3 minute warning. Honestly, if I had had a little more time and no bib to put on her, I probably would have given that dude an earful about NOT changing the time, the day of, with no warning on an event for little kids who had their hearts set on running it. But priority one was getting her in that race, no time for a side conversation.

As fast as I could, I pinned that sucker onto my daughter, as the director started lining up the kids to go. (Any idea how difficult it is to pin a bib on a 4 year old under pressure? I would have skipped the bib entirely, but that would NOT have flown with my daughter who knows better, and whom I was trying



desperately not to stick with a pin and thus scar from racing, bibs, or even just safety pins for the rest of her life.)

“EXCUSE ME SIR?!” she yelled to the man organizing the kids, “I JUST NEED TO GET ONE MORE PIN ON PLEASE.” So polite. We made due with the two pins I managed to get on and stepped up to the starting line still a little out of breath from the run to get there, but we made it. Just in time.

It wasn't a long race. In fact, the whole thing was done in less than 5 minutes (I seriously doubt it was actually a 1/2 mile for those of you impressed with my 4 year old's sub 10 minute per mile pace.) But in those 5 minutes, this is what my daughter taught me or at the very least reminded me about running:

1. **It's fun to run fast.** Really. When's the last time you ran as fast as you could? Try it. It's ok. Go ahead. If you're nervous, find a place where no one can see you.
2. **When you need a rest, take one.** There's no shame in walking if you need to so you can finish or run really, really fast again.
3. **Acknowledge your fans.** I think my daughter yelled just as loudly when she saw her sister as her sister did for her. And why not? The people who come to cheer you on put their life on hold for a little bit to support you, and some of them (my 2 year old being one) do not even quite understand why. Why not give them a little cheer, or at least a nod or a wave back to let them know you appreciate their support?
4. **Sometimes taking a drink will make you run faster.** There is no scientific reason why. It just will.
5. **It's ok if people run faster than you.** There's someone faster than them out there too.
6. **It's ok if your cousin beats you.** At about the 1/2 way point, my nephew took the lead so I tried to encourage my daughter to run up and catch him. “It's ok Mommy. I talked to him about this yesterday, and I told him it's ok if he beats me.” Running is an



individual sport. Yes, there are other people out there to race against. But really, the only person that matters is you. Can you do better than your previous best?

7. When you cross the finish line you win. My nephew, my daughter and some poor little boy who sobbed the entire way as his father dragged him along were the last three finishers in that order, pretty far behind the rest of the kids too. "I won!" My nephew shouted excitedly when he crossed the finish with nobody in sight. A few seconds behind, my daughter shouted "I won too!" She's right. Everybody who crosses the finish line wins. After all, it's rarely ever the race that's the big accomplishment; it's everything you go through to get there that makes you a winner.

8. Post race snacks are almost as cool as the medal. Depending on the race and the snacks of course.

9. Celebrate your accomplishment. Ice cream and juice boxes for our winners.

10. Wear your medal proudly. You've earned it. And my girlie wore hers nearly all day.

But ultimately, what she reminded me of is that in the grand scheme of things, finishing times don't matter. Sometimes, it's more important to just put the watch away and be thankful I even CAN run. Savor every step. That's what I watched my daughter do out there Saturday. Run for the sake of running. And in many ways, I sincerely hope she never ever loses that.



Kelly Collins is a runner, writer, blogger, wife and stay at home mamma to two beautiful and wildly entertaining little girls ages 2 and 4. She is currently training for her 4th marathon and studying to become a certified running coach. To read her latest adventure visit [Secrets of A Running Mom \(www.runfastmommy.com\)](http://www.runfastmommy.com).



Run For Fun

Super model and spokesperson, Kim Alexis is a long time runner and promoter of fitness for women. This Mother Can Run was fortunate enough to catch up with Kim to find out what motivates her to run.

Q: Everyone knows you as a super model, but not everyone knows you are a runner. When did you get into running and what attracted you to the sport?

I grew up swimming competitively from the age of 6-18. In my senior year I was swimming 5 ½ hours a day. When I moved to New York at 18 to start working as a model, I had to change my lifestyle as well as my eating habits. (You tend to eat a lot when swimming for 5 ½ hours.) I had to find another sport as I was sick of staring at a pool, couldn't motivate myself without teammates and a coach yelling at me, and it was hard to find a pool in NYC anyways.

Q: When was your first race?

I'm not sure about my first race. I started to run a lot in Florida. I had a friend who was a runner and he got me into racing. It could have been the River Run in Jacksonville, FL which is a 15K.

Q: What were your feelings about running as a result?

Racing was a good replacement for swimming. I was always competitive and there were a lot of races to choose from in any city I wanted.

Q: How has running affected your life?

It completes me. As a mom, I can either use the time to be by myself, to let my mind wander (I get great ideas when I run) or just listen to music.



Q: Is there anything you use for running that you love and can't run without?

My chocolate lab, Mocha. I feel guilty if I run without her.

Q: What makes running enjoyable for you?

Almost anything. I love to run in the rain, with music or without so that I am left with my own thoughts, I run in the snow...I feel complete after a run; I am strong, healthy and alive.

Q: I know one of your life goals is to encourage other women to be their best in all areas of life. What would you say to a single mom of three who feels like the deck is stacked against her?

There are always other mothers who are going up against the same things. (I was alone with 2 small boys for a couple of years until I found my husband Ron). Find them and do NOT be alone. MANY mothers would love to help, talk, or share their stories with you. You can find them on the play ground, church or any social spot...even a coffee shop, just find them. The worst thing for me was feeling alone with just my kids' conversations. I needed to vent or cry or just talk to other women to gain my strength, to know that I was not alone and also knew that other women were a lot stronger than I.

Q: As a model I'm sure you've witnessed unhealthy and damaging dietary practices and excessive fitness regimes. What is your advice to women about nutrition and exercise?

Believe it or not, no one in the business was a fitness fanatic. They starved but did not exercise. I was one of the few. That is what started me running marathons. I had to prove that I should be taken seriously as an athlete! Most of the other girls just looked fit but that was because they were young!

Q: Fitness has always played a big role in your life. How do you keep it fun?

I think it is a mind set. I make working out something that I know is good for me health wise, but also is a time for me to be alone

with myself or just doing something for myself and not my family. It helps to be married to an athlete (former Ranger, Ron Duguay). Sometimes he just looks at me and says, "Go out for a run. I've got the house. Just GO!" Feeling fit is also a healthy habit I grew up with.

Q: Why do you run?

I feel like I can be free, be me and love the efficiency of my muscles, my lungs and my mind all working together.

Q: Why did you choose to start running races?

I am a born competitor!

Q: In your experience, do most models run to keep thin?

NO, they starve!

Q: How do you manage your thyroid disease?

I take hormone replacement.

Q: How long have you had it?

Since I was about 35.

Q: Does running help?

I don't know, as I don't stop running to find out!

Q: How did you know there was a problem?

My oldest son, Jamie, was having learning difficulties. I took him to alternative doctors and at a food/environment allergy specialist, I found that while filling out the questionnaire for him, I checked yes in my mind on MY symptoms. I asked the receptionist what category I was in and she said thyroid, so I found a good endocrinologist for myself.



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"I feel like I can be free, be me, and love the efficiency of my muscles, my lungs and my mind all working together."
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Q: What are your running goals?

To run for the fun of it. The rest of my life is performance based so when I can do something, just one thing for me, then I will choose running.

Q: Are you planning any races in the near future?

I ran my last marathon Nov 2006 in NYC. I exhausted myself from that. I did not recover as fast and felt really run down so I can't do that to my body again. Other mothers can, I can't and that's okay.

Q: Having been a mother of small children, and now grown ups, which time of your life did you consider it harder to balance working out and being healthy?

Most definitely, it was harder, when they were young! Now, they can either work out with me or be on their own. When they were young, I had to adjust my schedule and get running in when I could. Sometimes between naps or I got the baby jogger out and strapped them in. They could only last 45 minutes before they complained!



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“As a mom, I can either use the time to be by myself, to let my mind wander or just listen to music.”

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Q: How many marathons have you done?

8 marathons!!!!!!!!!!!!!! 2 in LA, 5 in NYC and 1 in Florida. I was the spokesperson for the 1987 NY marathon when Fred Lebow was alive. I ran that 7 months after Jamie was born. My first marathon was not planned. I was going to run half with a friend who flew in the night before the race. He wanted me to run next to him and keep him company. After hearing him and my first husband (this was in 1985) whisper that I was not going to make it, I announced that I was not only going to make it but run the whole thing. See, I told you I am competitive!

Q: What is your favorite marathon and why?

I have done 3 cities, but any marathon you finish is your favorite!

Q: What was your first marathon like?

As I said, I ran with a friend who was older and has since died of cancer. I did not have mental time to anguish over it. I basically just listened to him and ran. We paced ourselves by saying, ok, this is a 10K! Anyone can finish a 10K. And we would go beyond and then make up another race... just piecing together little races that were not overwhelming. He and I crossed together holding hands in 4:24 or 4:25.

Q: What is your PR for a marathon?

3:52:00 for 1992 NYC

Q: How much were you training for that race?

I was dating Ron and he taught me to take care of myself after training. Not only would I get the miles in, but I would get adjusted and get a massage once a week. For the last marathon in 2006 at 46 years old, I had to train for the first time to a recipe. I had an elite marathoner train me, Toby Tanser. He emailed me my workout for the week 3 months in advance, and I still did my worst time. Toby did not cause me to have my “worst” time but unfortunately my

thyroid did. I was off thyroid medicine at the time, and I ran myself down. (I have been on and off 3 times).

Q: Do you train like you use to or have you taken a different approach throughout the years? When you first started, did you love running or hate it? Is it easier now or was it easier then? Why do you think this is so?
 Only the first 3 months were hard. My body had to get use to it and I was out of shape after taking too long of a break after swimming.

Q: How have you made fitness practical, accessible, healthy and fun for others?
 I don't know if I have done that. I am a firm believer in not preaching but getting them to love the idea of why fitness is good for them and let them work out the practicals. For example, I may tell you to get up 30 minutes earlier and run each morning and you may do it but it is not your heart's desire. You may be a born biker, or team sport player or like to go to the health club after work. Once you find what you want to do for you, the practicals take care of themselves. Each of us is different. I just want to have others catch my passion for how it feels to be fit and healthy.

Q: In the 80s, I think Cindy Crawford was a size 6. Now that can be considered large by model standards. What do you think of the current models and how thin everyone is?
 I am an 8(sometimes a 6). I try to be the best I can be. I can't be something I am not. If these young girls are so small then they can have the modeling business. It is too

stressful trying to fit into other's shoes! BUT on the other hand, I do not use my size 8 to give me a free ticket to eat all I want. We all have a healthy set weight; anything over or under is unhealthy.

Q:With the impossible standards set for women in the media, what advice would you give to the average person when it comes to feeling and looking good?
 Look to others for inspiration but not to BE THEM. Find out what works for you and then stick to it. Use other people to keep you feeling good about yourself. Don't hang out with those who drag you down either mentally or with bad lifestyle habits.

Q: What are you working on now? Any charity work? Projects?
 Currently I have been working on a women's jean line called Curve Appeal, a supplements line coming out in the fall, 2 books; one a cozy mystery and the other on what we covered above. I recently participated in a mission's trip to Haiti with my sons, and I will be featured in a Supermodel's portrait and documentary to air on HBO next summer.

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“Look to others for inspiration but not to BE THEM.”

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Name: Kim Alexis

Q: Favorite running song and the artist/band

Hillsong

Q: Favorite time of day to run

Late morning

Q: How do you prefer to train?

alone with dog.

with a partner

in a group

Q: Most scenic place you've ever run

Arica - Kenya and Sweden in the forest in the snow.

Q: Average miles per run

3

Q: Where do you usually run?

treadmill

outside

Q: What do you do while running?

listen to music

watch TV

talk

think

other Pick-up Dog Poop :)

Q: Favorite running gadget or gear

Dog Leash

Q: Why did you start running?

to get in shape

to get back to pre-pregnancy weight

for fun at the air force base

for sport

Q: Favorite race distance

5K

10K

1/2 marathon

marathon

The Gift to Run

My son, our third child and first boy, was born on November 16th, 2007 with Myelomeningocele Spina Bifida. He had been diagnosed while I was 5 months pregnant. We were told our son would likely not survive the birth, but that if he did, he would probably never walk. He was diagnosed in the womb an L5 (lumbar level 5) and we knew the paralysis would be pretty severe.

He was born an L4. Statistically L4's have a less likely chance of walking with aid than do L5's, but for some reason... our boy looked to be 100%. His muscle tone was good, he was moving from the moment he was delivered, and he looked to have feeling down to the tips of his toes.

I was diagnosed with endometriosis and as soon as George was old enough, we tried for our 4th. Our second son, 4th child, was born prematurely and we realized with both of our boys how precious life and health is.

In truth, I'm not sure why I started running. Something in me told me to just go for it. I spent years watching thinner people run by me while I would walk with my kids in the





stroller. I always wanted to be that person running, so one day, I just went for it. I was so thrilled at the fact that I had just run a block and didn't have a heart attack, that I went back out 2 more times that day. Within that week I had ran a mile, by the end of that month 3, and by November I was running my first 10k. Less than one year I would run my first marathon and my husband would run his just 6 months later.

My husband and I decided that we should use our legs, because we know that the ability to do so is such a blessing. Prior to the arrival of both of our boys, I was a smoker. We ate out more than once a week, and I was 70lbs overweight at their deliveries. Enough was enough.

It is my opinion that weight loss and running

are both 100% mental. It's also possible to run and not lose weight at all. I found that I didn't want to eat junk, because it made my runs more difficult and knowing that 1 mile only burned 100 calories, I wanted more food for my calories, which meant the food had to be healthier. The better I ate, the better I felt. The attitude shift was gradual. I heard someone one time say that NOTHING tasted better than skinny. She was right. I felt great after my runs, after my salad, after a week on the scale. I felt great getting the compliments and seeing the changes in the way my clothes felt and I had more energy. My kids noticed, my friends, my husband. Life was no longer exhausting... It was starting to be fun!

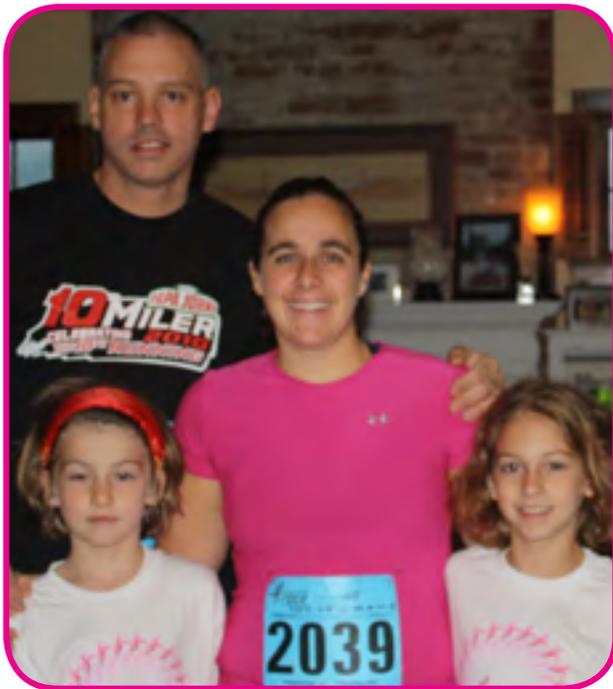
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 "I have a new opportunity to take advantage of the roads outside and the good food in my fridge."

Less than 1 year later and 50 pounds less, I ran my first marathon. This inspired my husband to run his first just 6 months later. Now, he is hooked. I try to listen to my body. If I want something, I eat it. I just know I have to run it off. I have never been good with portion control, which is part of the reason I loved running so much. I didn't have to starve. If you want to run, you have to eat. And you have to eat well, or you will be too tired to log the miles and that's if you even get motivated enough to get dressed. Every single day is a new day. When I wake up, I have a new opportunity to take advantage of the roads outside and the good food in my fridge. It's ok to eat sweets, but when I crave ice cream, I go for yogurt instead. With that being said... I ate my fair share of junk on Thanksgiving (I did wake up early that morning and to run the Turkey day 10k) and will on Christmas. Some meals just weren't meant to be healthy, but they also weren't meant to be eaten daily either.

I can remember wishing I had my 16 year old figure again, promising that if God would just give it back, I would take care of it. I then realized I wasn't taking care of the one I had. Take care of yourself. Stop making excuses.



Life really is amazing. It's fun running with my girls and camping with my boys. I love that I don't feel guilty when I eat a Smore or sip a glass of wine. I love that I am now able to love life. Every single person I have ever met struggles with their weight and making good choices, so take it one step at a time. Make just one extra good choice a day and remember, if you don't use it, you lose it, so use your legs, before you can't anymore.



Before running I was tired all of the time. Tired and self conscious. I wore only black and I never wanted to be in pictures. I was missing out on my memories for my children. What were they going to look at to remember me when I was no longer here for them? Running saved my life. Running saved all of our lives. My daughters now run cross country and run 1-2 times a week with me. My husband and I enjoy the competition in our distance runs, who went further, who felt better. We now take our kids hiking and camping. We enjoy life and are teaching our children how to enjoy it. It allows me to reflect, with every single step on the blessings I have been given with my son, and all of my children, and their ability to use their legs. Running is a gift, fast, slow, short, far, it doesn't matter.



My son is an L4 Myelo, but against all odds, he not only walks, he runs and looks to be 100% functional. The fact that I have legs that feel and function is a gift and one that I believe should not be taken for granted, because there is someone out there that wished they could do what I was capable of doing, but was choosing to let myself go.

I have always told my children that Can't means Won't. I tell them that they are capable of anything, they just have to be willing to do it. I wanted my son to know that I was thankful, not only that God provided him with functional legs, but that he provided me with them as well. So running seemed the only fitting way to show that thanks. When I run, when it hurts, I think of my George and how wonderful it is that I am able to feel that pain, because so many aren't. I run when I can. I run with my boys in the jogger and my

girls on their bikes. We run to and from cross country practices or my husband will take the kids to a soccer game and I'll run there and ride back with them. My mother sits with the kids for my early morning runs or evening runs and when she can't, I go to the YMCA, where my kids can do Yoga or Tae Kwon Do and I run on the treadmill. There have been many times I don't run until 8:30 or 9 at night, but I have

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 "I love that I don't feel guilty when I eat a Smore or sip a glass of wine. I love that I am now able to love life."

never ever regretted a run... I have only ever regretted the lack of one.

Spina Bifida could have ruined us, but it didn't, it inspired us... and taught us to endure. It gave us the courage to try to do the unthinkable... which for us, was to run.

My friend once said to me... I wish I had legs like yours. You have runner's legs. I said to her... you have runner's legs too, for if you can feel them, they will carry you however far you tell them to.

Thank you for hearing my story.

Jennifer Kowalski



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 For information and rates email us at:
advertise@thismothercanrun.com



A wife, a veteran, a mother, an advocate, a runner, and... a marathoner. Jennifer also has written a book called Letters to George. If you are interested in reading more about Jennifer's story click [HERE!](#)



“We spend January 1 walking through our lives, room by room, drawing up a list of work to be done, cracks to be patched. Maybe this year, to balance the list, we ought to walk through the rooms of our lives... not looking for flaws, but for potential.”

Ellen Goodman





Crazy ideas, we all have them right? Mine was thinking that my friends would want to train for a half marathon with me. I enthusiastically sent an email to all my friends, most who are turning 40 this year, figured it was a good goal to accomplish, bragging rights if you will. My email was filled with exclamation points proclaiming we'll be fabulous at 40! We'll lose weight! We'll be able to wear short-shorts! It was win-win in my eyes: we could bond during the training process, look 40 in the face and basically laugh, cross the finish line holding hands raised high with sweaty smiles on our faces, I'd host the

Guilty as Charged

after-party, and to top it off we'd have tighter asses –something we all moan about. The responses were mixed: plenty of no way José's, some maybes and one very meek yes; only one email response threw me for a loop. A very close friend, a mommy with a newborn, fired off a series of questions: "When do you train? How do you train? Where do you train?" I was hopeful that I was getting another yes, so I responded quickly, and with pep in my seat: "whenever I can, in the morning, at the track, on the treadmill, literally whenever I can squeeze it in". I was very satisfied with my response, I felt this would be the hook, line and sinker – I thought I covered all bases for a definite Yes; that was until I got the response: "Nope,

much? Do I not spend enough time with my children? Am I neglecting them if I train for this half-marathon? What about the other two half's, the 24-hour road relay and the adventure race I signed up for? Am I literally trying to run away from my kids? Was this my Ah Ha moment, shedding light on the fact that I am not a good enough, attentive enough or the playful mother that I feel I am? Doubting myself again which is inevitable as a mom 'cause as soon as the baby comes flying out of your vagina or yanked through your belly so does a world of doubt. You could have been the most secure, confident person in the world but once you gave birth – fuggetaboutit.

.....

"We'll be fabulous at 40! We'll lose weight! We'll be able to wear short-shorts!"

.....

maybe next year, don't want to be away from the baby any more than I already am". BAM - the Mommy Guilt slimed me as if I was a contestant on Double Dare.

This sent me into a tailspin. And some serious questions came up. Am I taking on too

I was so uneasy. I hemmed and hawed about my mommy skills; I looked at my children through different eyes. Matthew, the littlest bugger was climbing the couches as if they were Mt. Kilimanjaro, diving off like Superman. Then the next day he, in an act of pure, shall we say creativity, yanked

“I felt extremely guilty that I left him for an hour.”

turn into a George Costanza with no future? Was I doing it all wrong? After about two weeks of eye-spying my kids, the answer came as quickly as the guilts. No I am not doing a thing wrong, well maybe a few things – but that’s why there are therapists, right? BUT, my children are seeing a mom that is strong, active, takes care of herself, and is falling in love with a sport that she never thought twice about a year ago – which in turn makes me happy. Running is my outlet to get away from macaroni on my feet, screaming kids, a sometimes cranky husband- to give a little bit to myself so I can do it all over again tomorrow.

What’s ironic though, is the fact that over five years ago, I went out to dinner with this friend who wasn’t in the mommy phase, yet she gave me the best

Deanna Verbouwens is a writer, runner, blogger, working mom of two unbelievably active and very funny boys ages 3 and 7. Deanna is currently training for her 4th half marathon, and her third 24 hour relay, and various 10 & 5k’s, of course that all between working full time, and managing spaghetti on the ceiling, a dumped out fish bowl, a house and a family. To catch up on how Deanna tries to get it all done without completely failing visit her at The Unnatural Mother, www.theunnaturalmother.com.



off his diaper when I wasn’t looking and made like Picasso (um, yeah, a horror show). Was this the result of my bad mothering, or was he just being a boy? Richie, the five year old was sitting watching an iCarly marathon, drooling from his mouth. It was either that or potato chip crumbs, didn’t get too close. He was mesmerized

for what seemed like days. Was he going to turn into a George Costanza with no future? Was I doing it all wrong? After about two weeks of eye-spying my kids, the answer came as quickly as the guilts. No I am not doing a thing wrong, well maybe a few things – but that’s why there are therapists, right? BUT, my children are seeing a mom that is strong, active, takes care of herself, and is falling in love with a sport that she never thought twice about a year ago – which in turn makes me happy. Running is my outlet to get away from macaroni on my feet, screaming kids, a sometimes cranky husband- to give a little bit to myself so I can do it all over again tomorrow.

piece of advice of my life. It happened to be my first trip out of the house after I had my first son. I was suffering from Post Partum, and I felt extremely guilty that I left him for an hour – and out of her mouth came “If you don’t take care of yourself, you can’t take care of him”.

Well said if you ask me.

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Back On My Feet

By: Kelly Collins

“We can do this,” is the motto of the fine women of Back on My Feet at the Sheila Dennis House where running means far more than finishing times and fancy footwear. For these women, running is a fresh new start.

What began as a young woman’s daily run 3 years ago, when founder Anne Malhum would pass by a homeless shelter, has blossomed into an innovative non-profit program that partners with homeless shelters in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington D.C., Boston, and Chicago to promote self sufficiency and do just exactly what their name implies: get people back on their feet. And they do it with running.

“In an area of recidivism and set back, we are recognized as a fuller solution,” according to Chris Wink, Media Director of Back on My Feet. “We don’t just attack the obvious causes of homelessness by connecting our members with jobs, education and housing programs, but we also approach the bigger issues, by creating communities around running that help build our members up and offer support.”

While Back on My Feet does not provide its members with food or other basic living



necessities, that job is left to the shelters BOMF partners with like the Sheila Dennis House, an all women’s shelter in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. What it does provide is a way to lift people up so that they are best poised for success. And while running may seem to some like an odd way to achieve that goal, the BOMF staff has found plenty of reasons why it may not necessarily be such a stretch.

For starters, the symbolism between running and life is hard to miss, “needing to put that first step forward to get anywhere, going

“Running lessons can also make excellent life lessons.”

uphill, to be able to go down, how hard work does help make things easier,” are just a few examples cited by Wink of how running lessons can also make excellent life lessons.

“Second,” Wink says, “there is no shortage of academic research that shows physical activity has actual impact on the chemical balance in us, so running has a literal impact on how we feel. If we feel better, we can make better decisions and do better work.” And many BOMF members have gone on to do just that. Seventy percent of BOMF members have moved on to the Next Steps Program where members are assisted with job training programs, educational scholarships, and housing. Eighty-eight members have found jobs, 63 are in job training or school, and 48 members have found housing.

But it may perhaps be a third reason that keeps their members running and moving forward and their alumni coming back for more. “Running is a vehicle for our organization to create bonds between our members and volunteers,” according to Wink. “These connections create a support network – like any rehabilitation program features – that can help with communication, respect, trust and offer accountability in following through with goals.”

This Mother Can Run recently had a chance to profile one of Back on My Feet’s members, running mother extraordinaire, Doris Boyd, about her experience. Here’s what she had to say:

Name: Doris Boyd

Age: 54

Children: All of my children are grown now, but you never lose that motherly feeling.

James, 36

Christy, 33

Theresa, 32

Rachel 30

Denise 28

Tell us your story. How did you find yourself at the Sheila Dennis House?

I was living with my mom and babysitting for my grandkids. My mother moved south earlier this year, and I didn’t go with her – because I’ll always be a Northern girl.

I spent a couple months with one of my daughters, but soon enough I knew that she was a mama and I am a mama, and mamas don’t mix for too long.

I met with someone [from a Philadelphia city agency] who recommended I try to get back on my own by starting at Sheila Dennis.

Were you a runner before joining Back on My Feet?

No, I hadn’t really at all run since high school. And even then I wasn’t a runner.

What was it about Back on My Feet that appealed to you? Why did you decide to get

involved with the BOMF program?

I was so taken by the idea that they do it with you. The volunteers and staff and other people don’t say ‘go run and we’ll be here,’ but they run with you. That support and teamwork was something new to me.

What are the running workouts like?

One, two or three miles, usually slow runs but sometimes they really work us hard with doing some faster runs.

Do you run only with the BOMF or do you run on your own some too?

Only with my team!

When do you run and how often?

Everyday MWF at 5:30 a.m.!





What were you thinking that very first day you went on a group run with BOMF?

I was excited. I knew it was the start of something. There were lots of people because other BOMF teams came and people were taking photos and I just wanted to keep up!

How did it feel when you accomplished your first run?

I knew that I could do it then. I just started and kept going and I finished.

Have you run any races yet?

I ran the small Wissahickon Wanderers race back in August. My legs tightened up on me, but I still didn't come in last place, even at my age. That really felt like maybe this was something I could really improve in and have fun doing. It was just such a sense of accomplishment, to be able to look back and see something that I did.

.....
 "We can do this!"

What was your biggest challenge when you got started?

Just running; it's hard to get started. It hurts and it's hard.

What are your running goals?

I want to finish a 5k and I look forward to finishing 500 miles running with Back on My Feet. I just recently finished 50 miles.

When you get to a tough spot on your run and you feel like giving up, what do you do? What do you tell yourself?

I can do this. That's the slogan of our team – "we can do this" – and I just tell myself that this is something I can do if I keep trying.

How has running changed your life?

Well, I went from a 2X to a smaller size! It also has just taught me how if I really want to do something, I can know how to get there.

Do you think you will continue running when you leave BOMF?

I hope so. My team does give me a lot of the support it takes to get out there, but I think it has had a big impact, so I would want that to continue.

What do your kids think about your running?

They just keep saying, "Keep running mama!" They see that it is helping me, so they want me to keep doing it, to do anything that is going to help me.

Other than running, how else has BOMF made a difference in your life?

I sure have met a lot of people who really help with me in trying to find where I want to go and how to get there. Those people really help.

Tell us about the other women in the program with you. How do you all support and encourage each other? Any funny running stories?

It's different than if it was with men. We

aren't competitive. If one of us is having a bad day, we hang back and walk with her. We aren't trying to beat each other. We are trying to get through all of this together.

We just look out and tell each other about where we came from and we look to see how to help.

I remember the first day we ran that one of our teammates, who we call Grandma, came back after the run and said, "They had to slow me down, they had to stop me." We did that together.

If you didn't join BOMF, what would your life be like right now?

I would still be in the shelter, I think, but I also would probably still be at least a size 2X.

What has running taught you? Have you learned anything about yourself through this program?

It has taught me that I can do it. I can do this. I can look at something, and I can just go ahead and try to get there.

How will BOMF benefit you? If you stay in the program what can you get out of it?

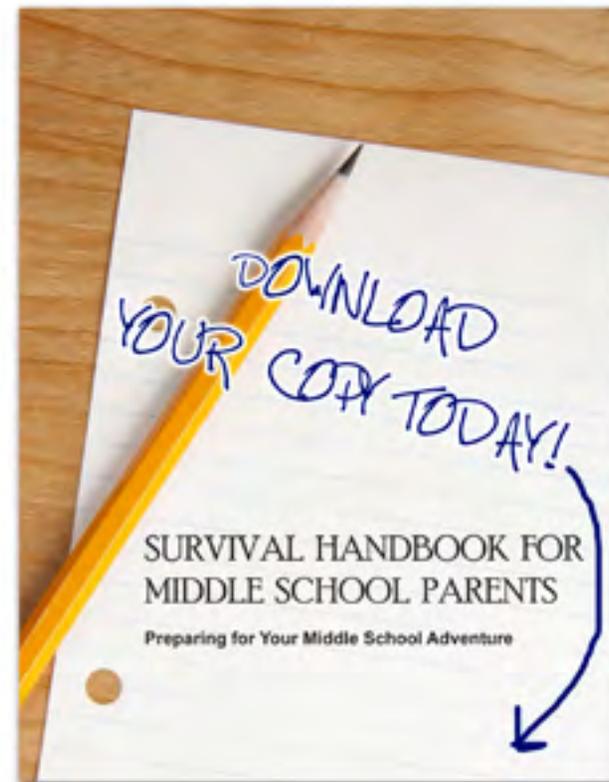
They helped me get involved with the GED classes I'm starting this month. And after, they're helping me get into culinary arts classes. I can finish those programs and look to get a job there, like in the services.

What advice do you have for other moms who might be struggling out there?

Look for inspiration in your children. If you believe in them, they'll believe in you and then you both can reach your goals.

What advice do you have for moms who might want to start running but don't know if they can do it?

If I can do it, at this age, you can do it. You just need to start and start slow. Just walk for a half hour, really slow. Then just speed it up.



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“Running has a literal impact on how we feel. If we feel better,
we can make better decisions and do better work.”

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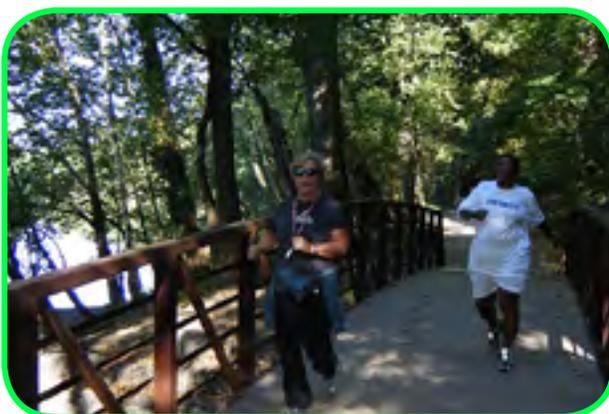
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“They just keep saying, ‘Keep running mama!’ They see that it is helping me, so they want me to keep doing it, to do anything that is going to help me.”

.....
Do your kids run? Are they interested in running one day?

No! [laughs] They wouldn't get up at 5 a.m. for anything. No, I don't think they will be running any time soon.

What lessons do you hope your kids learn by watching you run?

Even though I'm 54, I think I can still teach them that you can do something if you want to do it. But you have to try. Even if it's hard,



if you don't start you'll never finish.

What is the best thing about running?

I like how quiet and peaceful it is in the mornings and how you can just think.

What is the worst thing about running?

Running really fast.

Why do you run?

It can make me healthier and be something to work for.

What's your favorite kind of running workout?

A nice slow jog.

What's your least favorite kind of running workout?

When they have us do really fast runs, like run two blocks and then walk one and then run two blocks. It just doesn't end!

If I were to spot you near the end of your goal race or a particularly difficult run, what would you want me to say (or yell) to cheer you on?

Good job! Because I'm already near the end, I can see it. I just need that last little boost, that someone else is looking out and supporting and wants me to keep going too.

Back on My Feet has plans to expand in the first half of next year into Dallas-Fort Worth, Atlanta and Minneapolis. By the end of 2011, they'll expand to an additional two cities. If you'd like to help with their mission, please visit www.BackonMyFeet.org to make a donation to the organization as a whole or to a specific chapter. You can also support BOMF by becoming a charity runner on their behalf with a guaranteed entry at many of the big races across the country, with corporate sponsorships and contributions, or even just by simply spreading the word. Getting back on your feet is an easy task for no one, but with the support of the running community, these folks are tackling it one step at a time.



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“Even if it's hard, if you don't start you'll never finish.”
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chance for us to get it right.”

-Oprah Winfrey

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