



Inspiration

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Featured Runner Essays

The Bank of America Chicago Marathon's 45,000-participant field is made up of runners with a wide and colorful variety of backgrounds and motivations. Each month leading up to race day we will feature the personal story of a runner (or runners) from the 2010 field. We asked each of them a simple question: What is your marathon story? These are their responses.

October Essay: Sarah McPeck, 29, Suffolk, VA
September Essay: Hugo Alberto Saucedo, 34, San Antonio, TX
September Essay: Kyra Oliver, 43, Richmond, VA
August Essay: Roger Reynolds, 44, Ashland, VA
August Essay: Kathy Ziegert, 31, Madison, WI
July Essay: Luis Concha, 41, Mexico City, MX
July Essay: John Odorzynski, 30, Fitchburg, WI
June Essay: Diane Belyeu, 37, Lorain, OH
June Essay: Derek Brown, 21, Nashua, NH



Kyra Oliver, 43, Richmond, VA

Since I began running two years ago, I have realized that running has become not just a lifestyle, but a part of me. Through this, I have committed to running two marathons a year.

I am always running for my family and friends and all of their support. However, there was a special person that gave me 4 ½ months of his life. It is a person that means more to me than anything in this world, my son Hayes.

Hayes was born on January 23, 2002 and died on June 11 that same year. I received a phone call on June 11. The words that were uttered from the other end of the line are words I will never forget. "Hayes isn't breathing."

Hayes died of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome). I have no knowledge of why he died or what really caused it, but the pain has been incredibly intense ever since. Somehow I have found the strength to carry on his legacy through the Hayes Foundation, which was formed just four days after he died.

The foundation has reached out to over 100,000 families across the country. I hope to fill every state and beyond with my onesie "This Side Up While Sleeping," illustrating the suggested positioning for babies during nap or bedtime which may help prevent SIDS. The onesies have other tips on the back that may also help prevent SIDS.

The onesies have now been created in English, Spanish and Vietnamese. I hope to have them in every language and in every country one day.

After losing my son, a personal challenge that I will endure for the rest of my life, I became pregnant again. At five months in gestation, I discovered that the little girl-to-be inside my belly had a terminal illness. I lost her, too. My marriage could not withstand the heartbreak. I then sold my business which ended up being a loss of identity for me and within my community, something I did not anticipate, though it was a great learning experience. My mother fell ill with cancer, and died less than a year after being diagnosed at the age of 62. Her mother, my grandmother, died a few months later.

In the midst of all of this personal devastation in such a short amount of time, running has become a lifestyle for me—so important that I feel grateful that I can run every day. However, after being told that I had my third stress fracture in one training season, it was obvious that I was not going to Boston this spring. It has taken so much strength to deal with not being able to run. I have had to find alternatives, but nothing is the same as running to me. *Nothing.*

Last year, I realized my desire to run the five World Marathon Majors: Berlin, Boston, Chicago, London and New York. I had already run Boston and was scheduled to run New York in November. I ran New York finishing in 3:20:01 and was the 286th woman overall out of around 15,000. I have never been to Chicago, so the idea of not only hitting another one of the five majors, but also seeing a new place, was thrilling. What better way to see it than to run it? That is one of my favorite characteristics of running. I get to see the area from the ground—not from a car or a plane, but right there with it. It is the best view.

My ultimate goal is to finish. But I have to be honest, since becoming a runner only two years ago and realizing my potential, I have become quite competitive. I hope to run a PR of 3:15 and be in the top 2-3% of all women.

