

Running toward Forty

A Message from Laurie Andrews



“It takes courage to grow up and become who you are.”
e e Cummings

I began running in earnest during the summer of 2006. I did my first 50-mile race in September that year. Work had been taking a stressful toll on my life and I felt yet another precious summer in the Tetons slipping away. Too busy for hikes in the hills among wildflowers or chance encounters with wildlife in the early morning, I also missed the crisp morning air just as the sun rises over quiet Wyoming landscape. So I started running long loops in the Park (Grand Teton). I ran Granite Canyon to Death Canyon, Phillips Pass to Hurricane Pass, Cascade Canyon to Paintbrush Divide. I watched summer transition into fall. A friend urged me, pushed me, and cajoled me into entering the 50-mile race. I went. I ran. I had fun.

With the gift of some time and attention from Coach Lisa, I began to seriously train for some ultra running events. I found that the races gave me a sense of purpose and a regime of training. I could justify my endless desire to be outside.

I never really thought about the impact my running would have on others. I was even a bit self-conscious about the long distances. I worried others would analyze my running behavior, removing my sense of fun and purpose. Instead, I found support.

On this note, I turn 40 in March. This milestone screams for a challenge.

The Marathon Des Sables is huge. Some consider it the toughest foot race on earth. It covers 151 miles (in sections similar to 25, 34, 38, 82, 42, 22 km) over six days – equivalent to 5 marathons. In addition, competitors carry everything they will need for the duration (apart from a tent) on their backs (food, clothes, medical kit, sleeping bag, etc.). Water is rationed and handed out at each checkpoint and competitors prepare their own food throughout the race. Mid-day temperatures will hit 120 degrees F as each person runs on uneven, rocky ground combined with 20% of the distance in sand dunes. On the fourth day, the competitors set off across the barren wilderness to complete a 50 mile stage. Few people complete this before dark that evening and some will not arrive until after dark the next night. This is followed by the 42 km marathon stage.



Above: Me and some friends after completing Desert RATS, a multi-day stage race from Grand Junction, Colorado to the Moab, Utah.



Between the upcoming race and my milestone birthday, I'd like to put the focus on something else for a moment. CLIMB Wyoming strikes a chord for me and the name alone conjures up the big challenges that we face in our day-to-day lives. I feel a commonality of purpose with the young mothers as they reach for their full potential and develop self-sufficiency against daunting challenges.

People comment that they can't fathom running 100 miles. I find it amazing what these young, single mothers face every day. And they triumph. They persevere.

As I reach this milestone birthday, it occurs to me that we are all more alike than different; we want to be accepted and embraced for who we really are, for our authentic self. We have to believe in ourselves to accomplish wonderful things. And somewhere along the way we need help and support.

As I strive toward these big goals, my support base makes it all doable. My friends and family, coach and colleagues, hold me up and let me fly. In a similar way I see CLIMB Wyoming support these young women – offering education, counseling, and parenting classes so that young mothers can succeed and become self sufficient.

So if the spirit moves you –
If you are inspired by a long run in the desert or
Inspired by young mothers that are making stride in their own lives.

Give to CLIMB Wyoming . . .
Give \$40 for a milestone birthday
Give \$150 dollars for 150 miles run in the desert
Or give your time and love to support a woman in your life.

Go Well.

With Love,

Laurie

