

HIGH COUNTRY RUNNING

Local runs the US with MS

BY BETSY MUELLER
Special to the Daily Sun

Running has always been a part of me. As a kid, running was freedom to go. Running was something no one could take away from me.

I was good at it, and it felt effortless. It brought me happiness. However, as an adult, my relationship with running shifted. It be-

came a way to stay fit and healthy and to feel good.

In 2021, everything changed when I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS). The fear of the unknown and the possibility of losing my ability to walk, run or even move freely weighed heavily on me. That year, I became cautious and fearful, isolating myself and worrying about what

lay ahead. My joy of running began to fade, but I fought to hold on.

MS is not just about losing physical abilities. It is a journey of pain, fear and struggle, but also one of hope, strength and endurance.

At one point, my husband encouraged me to run a marathon. Slowly, my mindset shifted

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from living in fear to embracing life without regret. I didn't expect how powerful the running experience would be in helping me cope. I realized that I could keep moving forward, literally and figuratively, despite the challenges of MS.

This disease is a part of me, but it doesn't define me. It can even empower and inspire me and others to do big, bold things.

With this fresh perspective, I decided to take on a big challenge — running across the entire United States. The goal of running across the country quickly became about more than just me.

More than anything, I want to raise awareness for MS and show

others facing illnesses that they don't have to give up. I'm not running to be the fastest or to set records. I'm running because it's part of who I am.

Through this, I've learned to live each day with intention. This run is a challenge, a way to push myself in a way that gives back to others. It's about courage. It's about taking the first step, even when the next one is uncertain. I hope to inspire others to stay active, to keep moving and to keep fighting.

I began my run across the country last Sunday, March 9. I'm lifted up by the love and support of my family. As a mom of three amazing daughters, and wife to a supportive husband — I feel far from alone in this.

Knowing people in

the Flagstaff community and the MS community are cheering me on is empowering. Through the miles and trials I face ahead, I hope others will find the strength to keep moving forward, even in the face of hardship.

Betsy Mueller is a Flagstaff resident, mother, and runner who was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2021. This past week she began her run across the country. You can follow her progress and learn more about her journey on her website: betsyrunswithms.com. Contribute your running news and story ideas to High Country Running of 500 words or less by sending an email to Coordinating Editor Rachel Smith (rachscheid18@gmail.com).



BETSY MUELLER, COURTESY

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