

“Losing my arm made me love life more.”

By Angela Dubay
Marathon Mom



Kina Bailey at home with Kassie (11), Noah (10), Logan (7) and Connor (4)

It is what it is. That’s Kina Bailey’s motto. “Mom, they didn’t give me enough fries. It is what it is,” Bailey says. “I lost my arm. It is what it is. Deal with it.” And she does.

In fact, Bailey, 37, does a lot more than just deal. The self-proclaimed “one-armed girl” runs marathons. And she recently qualified for the Boston Marathon, the world’s oldest annual marathon.

“I never dreamed I would qualify,” Bailey says. “When you run the Boston Marathon, you become a marathoner – officially.”

With nine races under her belt, most people would agree Bailey already holds that title. But she had to convince herself. A week after running the Portland Marathon in 3:41, where she earned her qualifying time and placed 945 out of 7,747, she ran the Spokane Marathon, a notoriously hilly race, in 3:46.

"Okay, so I did train," Bailey says. "I do deserve to be happy about my time."

She didn't set out to qualify for the Boston Marathon. But she did change her strategy for running the Portland race. Instead of saving her energy for the end, she ran faster for as long as she could and she pushed herself to continue running that pace with positive self-talk.

"Running distance to me is mostly mental," she says.

Bailey graduated from Eastern Washington University in 1995 with a bachelor's degree in education. She uses her degree to homeschool her four children, ages 4, 7, 10 and 11, and to teach Tae Kwon Do through a program in Cheney called HomeWorks, a partnership program through the Cheney School District for homeschool families.

Warm, beautiful and down-to-earth are three ways to describe Bailey. Inspirational is another.

"Losing my arm made me love life more," she says.

The accident that claimed Bailey's left arm occurred in 1990 on her first day of working at a cannery in Alaska, between her freshman and sophomore year of college. After she accepted the initial loss of her arm, Bailey felt free. She realized material things did not make her happy and she didn't rely on anyone else for approval.

"It's your responsibility to be happy," she says.

Though Bailey initially started running 10 years ago to lose baby weight after her second child, she continues to run because it empowers her.

"I like that challenge," Bailey says. "Physical, mental and emotional. It strips you to the bare bones."

She also wants to be a positive influence, not just for those with disabilities, but for anyone who's facing a challenge.

The 2008 Boston Marathon is April 21. In the months leading up to the event, Bailey plans to run four to six miles almost every day, with a long run every two weeks (part of her training included the Las Vegas Marathon in December 2007, where Bailey crossed the finish line in 4:00).

And while the Boston Marathon will represent the peak for this runner, Bailey says she won't let up on running once the famous race is over. She even hopes to run a marathon in 3:30 one day.

"Or maybe I could just relax and enjoy running," she says with a laugh. **E**

Bailey at the 2007 Portland Marathon (Oct. 7)



Photo courtesy: Racephotos.net

Bailey shares a lesson with her son



Bailey in the 2007 Spokane Marathon (Oct. 14)

