

## Her own marathon of hope

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It's now the height of road-race season, a time of year that brings Canadians from all walks of life out to run. This week, we profile four runners with unique reasons for lacing up. Today, how Shelby Hayter of Ottawa refused to allow Parkinson's disease to break her stride.

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That first race was something of a revelation. Shelby Hayter was 13 and she crossed the finish line well ahead of the rest of the Grade 7 girls. The next year, her teacher told her to run with the boys.

"It just seemed like a natural form of exercise for me," she recalls. "It didn't take a lot of effort to do well."

She continued running in high school, where she was thrice named her school's athlete of the year. In her first year at the University of Western Ontario she joined the cross-country team, and after that continued to run regularly for exercise.

Now, at 40 and the mother of three kids ages 11, eight and six, Hayter runs four or five times a week. When her husband gets home from work, it's her signal to go and she fits a run in before dinner.

"It's always been about clearing my mind. It's always been about keeping trim. It's always been about a quick and easy form of exercise," explains Hayter from her Ottawa home, still dressed in her jogging clothes after having just returned from interval training. "Even when I was younger it was a time out from my studies or a time out from work and certainly, as a mom, it's my time just for me, my time to think."

Hayter took a five-year running hiatus from the time of her first pregnancy until the third child came along, but soon picked up where she left off. She ran her first marathon when she was 20 and her second when she was 39, crossing both finish lines with the same time.

Between the three kids, her volunteer work, her duties as a Brownie troop leader and the running, Hayter is constantly on the go. Which is why last year's diagnosis of Parkinson's disease came as such a shock.

"It's kind of ironic that this disease that slows you down has hit me," she says. "Here I am this long-distance fast runner with a disease that can cause rigidity and stiffness and muscle slowness. That's what boggles my mind."

When the tremors in her left arm and hand started last summer, she blamed it on too much caffeine.

She cut out the coffee but the tremors continued. It was then the family history of Parkinson's crossed her mind. "I am not a neurotic person, but I'm a mom of three, so I thought I better be smart and be brave and check this out."

It took 10 months and a battery of clinical tests until a doctor sat her down and told her flat out, "You have Parkinson's disease."

"I didn't flip out because I had known for ten months that something wasn't right. Even though the tests were coming back clear, I would lie in bed at night and feel this tremor, like a little motor running that I couldn't turn off."

Before leaving the doctor's office, she told him she was training for the Boston marathon. Thankfully, he said exercise is highly recommended to combat the stiffness and rigidity of the disease. "And he told me to be careful and to listen to my body. He didn't see any reason why I shouldn't train."

Ultimately, the diagnosis gave Hayter the green light to run. During the uncertainty of not knowing what was wrong she was running, hoping it wouldn't cause further damage. "I thought, OK, they encourage exercise, that's it. I'm training, I'm going to Boston."

Hayter wasn't training alone. Her younger sister, Andrea Mozas, is also a runner, and after suffering and recovering from a brain tumour four and a half years ago, she said to Hayter, "I want to run a marathon."

"And I said, 'No, you don't.' But she told me it was something she had always wanted to do and now even more so. So I said, OK then."

Hayter knew this meant she, too, would run a marathon, as she wanted to keep an eye on her sister.

Hayter trained in Ottawa and Mozas at home in Toronto, and they met up for the Toronto marathon. It was there that Hayter qualified for Boston with a finish time of three hours and thirty minutes, twenty minutes under the standard required for her age group. Mozas got her Boston qualification later at the Picton, Ont., marathon.

"The minute she crossed the finish line, that was it. There is no way but forward. We were going to Boston," recalls Hayter.

Then came the Parkinson's.

Right after the diagnosis, Mozas did some research into the disease and told Hayter there had been some major progress made towards a cure and the only roadblock appeared to be funding.

"So I thought, 'That's what we're doing,' " says Hayter. "I thought how unique is it that I've been diagnosed at my age and there can't be that many people with Parkinson's who have qualified to run the Boston marathon. Those two things combined could really allow me to be a vehicle for awareness."

Four days after her doctor's appointment, Hayter walked into the Parkinson's Society in Ottawa, told them her story and that she was running in the Boston marathon. They asked her to be their spokesperson.

Mozas and Hayter decided they would take it easy during the Boston run. "Our families were coming, we were going to raise money and it was the pinnacle event of road racing, so we decided to go enjoy it and not race."

The run in Boston clocked in at four hours and 8 minutes. To date, she has raised \$33,000. "They keep saying a cure is within a ten-year reach," she says.

She feels the tremors in her arm when she runs, but it doesn't affect her ability, and Hayter is running more than she ever has.

"It's for my mind as much as it is for my body," she says. "And the fact exercise can resist my body's temptation to weaken, I'm definitely going to keep it up for that reason alone. But there are still so

many questions. I'm not on any medication right now, so running is the best thing I can do for my body."

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