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Ashleigh Jardine
Andrews University

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Honoring God with the Body

BY ASHLEIGH JARDINE

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.—1 Corinthians 6:19, 20 NIV

Being healthy means much more to Ashleigh Walton than diet and exercise. The college junior loves to run and will enter her first full marathon on October 9. Ashleigh isn't just running for the workout. She's participating to help hundreds of people in Japan and around the world.



Ashleigh Walton, right, sees running as a way to increase her health and help hundreds of people. Her mother, Astrid Walton, left, ran with Ashleigh in her first half marathon.

Ashleigh never dreamed she would have this opportunity, let alone enjoy running! In 2009, she began the exercise as a weight loss tool and has since lost 75 pounds.

"My freshman year at Andrews University, I decided to try things that I hadn't done in a long time because of my weight. I got on a treadmill one day and realized I enjoyed it!" she says. "I started doing it more and more. ... I had no idea my body was capable of this."

Excited by the progress, Ashleigh entered several 5K events and a half marathon. She then began training for the Bank of America Chicago Marathon, a 26.2-mile race through the city streets. When Ashleigh went online to register, however, her heart sank. The marathon had sold out in record time.

"More than 45,000 people had signed up already!" Ashleigh says. "I looked for ways to still enter the race, and the only possibility was through a charity bid. I figured this was a God thing because it was as if He was saying, 'Listen, if you could do this for yourself, why not do this for Me and others?'"

Following much prayer, Ashleigh registered to run for the American Red Cross Run Red Team. She continues to train and is raising \$1,200 (nearly \$50 per mile) to aid efforts in Japan and wherever the needs are greatest. She claims God is responsible for this life-changing opportunity. "I feel a blessing of health whenever I run, and it's given me endurance in other things," Ashleigh says. "Through it all, I've seen God the most. I've seen Him working in how I came to this thinking and found a way to increase my health and a way that I can help hundreds of people. ... I do my best to honor Him."

To learn more about Ashleigh's goal, visit american.redcross.org/goto/ashleighwalton.

Ashleigh Jardine is a freelance writer from Berrien Springs, Michigan, where she is majoring in physical therapy at Andrews University.

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THE LAKE UNION HERALD STAFF

- P.O. Box 287, Berrien Springs, MI 49103-0287 | (269) 473-8242
- Publisher: Don Livesay president@lucsd.org
- Editor: Gary Burns editor@luc.adventist.org
- Managing Editor/Display Ads: Diane Thurber herald@luc.adventist.org
- Circulation/Back Pages Editor: Judi Doty circulation@luc.adventist.org
- Art Direction/Design: Robert Mason
- Proofreader: Candy Clark

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

- Adventist Midwest Health: Julie Busch Julie.Busch@ahss.org
- Andrews University: Rebecca May RMay@andrews.edu
- Illinois: Glenn Hill GHill@illinoisadventist.org
- Indiana: Van G. Hurst vhurst@indysda.org
- Lake Region: Ray Young LakeRegionComm@cs.com
- Michigan: Ron du Preez rdupreez@misda.org
- Wisconsin: Juanita Edge jedge@wi.adventist.org

CORRESPONDENTS

- Adventist Midwest Health: Sheila Galloro Sheila.Galloro@ahss.org
- Andrews University: Keri Suarez KSuarez@andrews.edu
- Illinois: Glenn Hill GHill@illinoisadventist.org
- Indiana: Judith Yeoman JYeoman@indysda.org
- Lake Region: Ray Young LakeRegionComm@cs.com
- Michigan: Julie Clark jclark@misda.org
- Wisconsin: Cindy Stephan cstephan@wi.adventist.org

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