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Merrimack Valley Striders Memorial Scholarship Fund
"What Running Means to Me"

Out of breath in a stage of temporary exhaust and fatigue, I shouted in frustration to my evil coach, "What is the point of this! It's not fun, why do people do this to themselves?" I was tired and uncomfortably hot. My coach responded to my freshman self, "Running is something you can do for the rest of your life. Just stick with it, and hopefully you'll learn to love it." Four years later by senior year, this track life has become a part of me, and I can honestly say I love it.

There is a starting line and a finish line, yet somehow an entire world has risen from such a simple basis. To race, it takes courage to start, fighting perseverance to finish, and an aggressive willingness to see "who has the most guts," as Steve Prefontaine once said. Every race has a unique story, whether it is in the journey leading up to the performance or in the performance itself.

Although I am proud of my personal accomplishments, I will never forget how my stomach used to turn when I thought of upcoming track meets and how my knees would tremble as I stood on the starting line. I can talk for hours about my experiences and how I have felt every emotion in the dictionary through track. I used to be afraid of dying out and looking like a fool, which I do not doubt I have done numerous times, but I have learned of my competitive spirit that refuses to allow myself to give up.

Running has been a solid sport, an activity I knew I could continue improving in as long as I made the effort. When all else seemed to be crumbling, the track field stood as an escape where I could go to, and I got lost in this concept. I did what my coach suggested and not only did I continue attending every practice, but my heart pushed me to be the best I could be and I would run my heart out. I let my determination drive me past my fear to fail and to be confident but most of all, to believe in myself instead.

Something special happens when a group runs together. I never expected to form such close friendships with the track team. We travel, race, practice, and compete together. We support each other in a way that goes beyond the sport, and I have met the most amazing and ambitious people I could have not met elsewhere. Every day I feel lucky and fortunate to have wonderful friends by my side, people I never hesitate to introduce as my track family.

So when you ask me, "What running means to me," at this present time in my life running means the world to me. I have learned incredible life lessons through running, and my coach is an inspiration to me from all he has taught me. My track career has been a wonderful experience, and indeed, I usually find myself feeling happy when I look around at the team or when I am home recalling a tough workout. I say this in wonderment, but I have truly learned to love track and running tremendously.