

Alicia Gonzalez

31, Executive Director, Chicago Run

PHOTO Akin Girav

When did you start running?

I stayed extremely active through sports and activities in high school and college, eventually teaching aerobics, spinning and being a personal trainer as my side job in college. All those years, I ran recreationally but never raced. When I was 26, I decided to run my first marathon, so I signed up for the Chicago Marathon. I have not stopped since. I have run seven marathons, including the Boston Marathon this past April. As for Chicago Run, this is my calling. This organization brings together all of my passions – education, youth, non-profit management and athletics. It has been a wonderful experience launching Chicago Run and watching the impact that it is making in the lives of children across the city.

Any funny or embarrassing stories?

I was hit by a golf cart in June 2007 and broke my left ankle. But I did not know that it was broken, I just thought it was sore. I continued to run on it for two weeks (limping the whole way) averaging 60 miles a week at that point. I was stubborn and thought that the pain would eventually go away. One day after a 12 mile run, a doctor whom I was running with said that I should immediately get an X-ray because it was so swollen. Thus, two days later I got myself to a podiatrist and found out that I had a complete fibular fracture and could not run for the next six weeks.

Have you ever wanted to give up?

The last few miles of the Boston Marathon were brutal, but I thought about how hard some of our kids work at Chicago Run and this got me through the last few hills.

Have you ever run more than the length of a marathon?

No, I have yet to run more than 26.2 miles. It might be in the cards to do an ultra-marathon, but for now 26.2 miles is far enough.

How do you take your café?

My coffee needs a little kick to it, so I always add a shot of espresso and a little skim milk.

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