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Physics Prof Wins 24-Hour Run, Funds for Special Olympics



Physics professor Jenny Hoffman '99. Photo [Courtesy of Jen Goellnitz](#)

By [Jessica A. Barzilay](#), Crimson Staff Writer

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For Physics professor, mother of three, and ultrarunner Jenny Hoffman '99, “time is [her] most limited resource.” Maybe that’s why she chooses to make the most of every day; just last month she not only participated in but also won a 24-hour endurance run, clocking in at 127 miles by the event’s conclusion.

Although Hoffman celebrated the personal victory that came with this win, she was even more thrilled to raise more than \$11,000 for the Special Olympics, based on donations from the Harvard Physics department and physics communities worldwide.

“I’m so blessed and I’ve benefitted so much from having fun athletic events to work towards,” Hoffman said. “I applaud the Special Olympics for providing the same opportunity for people who don’t have all of the same advantages in life.”

Hoffman, a microscopy specialist, is no stranger to long runs, but she has not always been an ultra marathoner. In fact, she remembers a time before she was aware a “human being could run that far,” she said. After learning about 100-mile races from a high school field hockey coach, her interest was piqued, and over the past ten years, she has committed herself to training and participating in long distance races.

“I’m not a fast runner by any means,” Hoffman said. “I have to do distance because I’m competitive and like to win, so I have to do something where it only matters how hard you try not how talented you are.”

The 24-Hour Endurance Run, the race Hoffman won last month in Cleveland, certainly fits her criteria for long distance. Participants compete to run the longest distance in a one-day period, often posting final scores of over 100 miles in the allotted time.

“If there’s anything that can come out of this, I hope it’s inspiring more people to donate time and money to the Special Olympics because it’s a cause I really believe in,” Hoffman said.

Hoffman’s ambitions did not stop at simply winning, however, as she set herself the goal of qualifying for the United States National Team. In 2006, Hoffman realized this dream, joining the national team only to discover that she had been pregnant with her first child throughout the qualifying process.

After forfeiting her spot, Hoffman vowed to return to the sport and entered this year’s race with the sole goal of making the six-person female squad. Although she earned first place in the Endurance Run, her distance puts her at 7th rank nationally. She is considering additional competitions before the 2015 World Championship roster is cemented.

“I think of life as something you start with an empty bag, and you have an opportunity to fill your bag with experiences,” Hoffman said. “This was an experience that I wanted to have in my bag when I look back on my life.”

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This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

CORRECTION: October 21, 2014

An earlier version of this article incorrectly stated the amount of money Physics professor Jenny Hoffman ’99 raised for the Special Olympics through her endurance run. In fact, she raised more than \$11,000. The article also incorrectly stated Hoffman's endurance running rank. In fact, she is ranked 7th nationally.