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Friend the Sentinel

Run Jenny, run

Transcontinental runner visits Friend during world-record attempt



On a mission to break a world record, Jenny Hoffman, runs through Crete on Oct. 13 after passing through Friend and Dorchester a hour earlier. Hoffman is running coast to coast.

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By **Hanna Christensen**, sciereporter@sewardindependent.com

Jenny Hoffman of Boston is on track to break the world record for the fastest women's transcontinental run.

She ran through Friend, Dorchester and Crete in mid-October and said she loved the beautiful scenery and kind people she met.

Hoffman, a quantum physicist and professor at Harvard University, is always up for a challenge. She has been ultrarunning competitively for 20 years and has won three national titles. She said she sees running across the country as the pinnacle challenge.

She said she was also motivated by the chance to see America from coast to coast at a running pace.

"At a running pace, you see so many more details and you talk to more people – it's very different than driving across the country," she said. "It's been really inspiring for me to see all the geography and the different mini-cultures in the U.S. that we pass through and just how friendly people are."

Hoffman started her run in San Francisco on Sept. 15 and hopes to finish in New York City by Nov. 5 to beat the record. The current world record, held by Sandra Villines, is 54 days and 16 hours. However, Hoffman's crew chief, Jill Yeoman, said her personal goal is to complete the run in 50 days, and she is on track to do so.

Hoffman said all the small towns she ran through had their own unique personalities and all of the people she met were very nice. She and Yeoman were struck by the beauty of Nebraska's sunsets, sunrises and landscape each day.

"It really made me think of the 'O beautiful for spacious skies, For amber waves of grain.' I mean, that's Nebraska," Hoffman said.

Some Crete, Friend and Dorchester residents saw Hoffman during her run and were able to chat with her.

"Everyone in Nebraska was so kind," she said. "They stopped and asked how we were doing and if we needed help with our car. It was really beautiful."

Hoffman has not stopped thinking about completing the run ever since her attempt to break the record in 2018. She was on track to beat the record by six days but tore her meniscus on day 46 and was unable to continue. She was just six days away from reaching the finish line.

Yeoman said she has been inspired by Hoffman's perseverance and drive throughout the journey.

"She's really doing it for personal reasons but she knows it can be very inspiring to other people, and she likes that," Yeoman said. "She calls it her 'big, audacious goal.'"

Every morning, Hoffman is awake before 3:30 a.m. and is in bed by 8:30. Yeoman said basically all she does is eat, sleep and run.

“Every time she wakes us up, and I’m always dead asleep, I’m a little surprised because she’ll say ‘Okay, it’s 3:30, let’s get going,’ and ‘Good morning, it’s 3:30!’” Yeoman said. “I just don’t know how she does it and how she gets herself going every morning after running more than two marathons every day.”

Hoffman has been able to self-fund her approximately 3,000 mile journey thus far. She said she is grateful to have this opportunity and said it has been difficult but rewarding.

“It’s hard because the body probably isn’t meant to run 65 miles a day, so there’s always something that hurts,” she said.

Physical pain isn’t the only challenge Hoffman has had to endure. She also faces difficult weather (including a hail storm), runs on a variety of terrains, was once chased by two dogs and has to somehow get in enough calories to fuel an average of 14 hours of running a day.

“I’m motivated by goals and motivated to see what’s around the next corner. I’m motivated to think about what snack I’m going to eat at the next aid station,” she said.

Hoffman said she also feels very lucky to have an amazing, supportive crew that provides food, moral support, sunscreen and whatever else she needs along her run. Yeoman, who was family friends with Hoffman prior to the run, said she became her crew chief after she heard about Hoffman’s dream and knew she wanted to help her fulfill it.

Hoffman is chronicling every day of her journey on her Facebook page, Run Jenny Run. Running across the country has been so personally impactful for her that she hopes to one day write a book about her experiences.

“I think so many of us live in a bubble and there’s kind of the red versus blue and politics and religion, but we’re all Americans and we all have families and we all love our neighbors,” she said. “I wish we could all have this experience of meeting such diverse Americans and realizing that we’re all humans on the same team.”