

# Running Down a Dream

Local runner Jenny Balcom completes major marathon milestone

Jenny Balcom, a dedicated runner from Klickitat County, has achieved an extraordinary milestone by completing all six World Marathon Majors. Her journey, which began as a personal challenge after quitting smoking, has transformed her into an inspiration for runners everywhere.

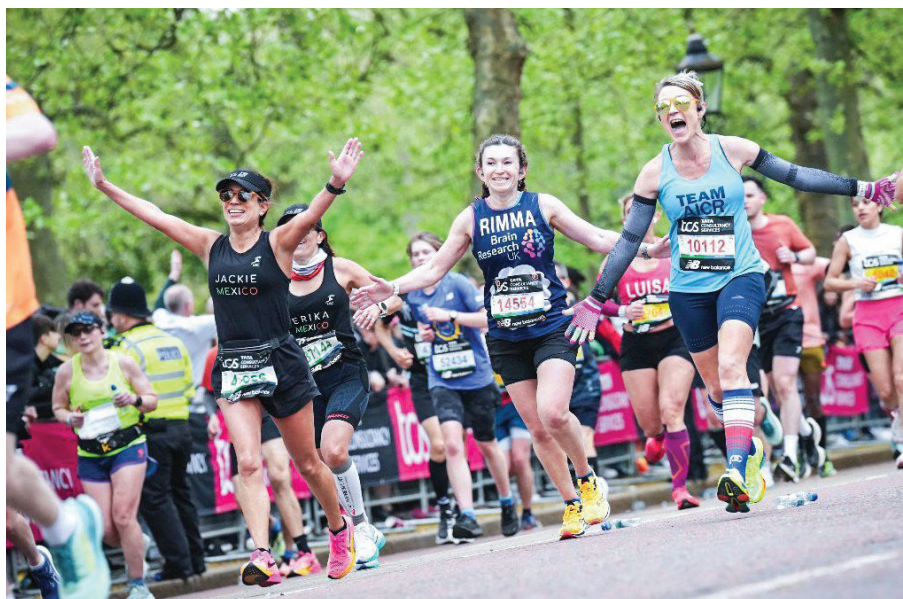
Jenny's race began in 2006. She started walking with the modest goal of running a mile. This initial aspiration soon blossomed into a passion for long-distance running. Her first marathon was in Wenatchee. She finished in 4 hours and 9 minutes—she had found her stride.

Her second marathon at the Columbia Gorge saw a remarkable improvement, finishing in 3 hours and 35 minutes. A friend pointed out the time was good enough to qualify for the Boston Marathon. Motivated by the revelation, Jenny again entered the Wenatchee Marathon, and this time officially qualified for the Boston Marathon.

Jenny ran the Boston Marathon in 2015 and again in 2016. The second time, she noticed a fellow runner wearing a prestigious World Major Marathons medal. Inspired, she set a new goal: to complete all six of these iconic races.

The six World Marathon Majors are Tokyo, Boston, Berlin, London, Chicago and New York. Jenny's quest took her to the New York Marathon in 2018 and the Chicago Marathon in 2019.

With the major marathons being extremely popular, some draw lotteries to allocate who can run. In 2022, Jenny ran the Berlin Marathon after being selected in the lottery on her first attempt. However, the London Marathon proved more elusive with seven years of failed lottery attempts. Undeterred, Jenny joined a cancer charity, raising \$5,000 for the American Institute for Cancer Research. Some charities are



given entry slots at the London Marathon, and through this Jenny finally secured her spot. Simultaneously, she entered the lottery for the Tokyo Marathon and was chosen. In a remarkable feat of endurance, she ran both the Tokyo and London marathons just a month apart in the spring of 2024, completing her World Majors journey.

Throughout her marathon career, Jenny has run the Boston Marathon eight times, calling it her favorite and the true “spirit of a marathon.” She says she is “holding onto this feeling of accomplishment,” but is also considering new challenges such as joining the 7 Continents Marathon Club or running in Athens, the birthplace of the marathon.

Her advice to others: “More people need to be scared and dream big!”

Jenny's favorite memories include not just the races and elite runners but the support she received during her long training runs from her husband, Jared.

“He would drive beside me, handing me things and talking to me,” she says. “He really supports me.”

Jared's pride in Jenny's achievements is palpable.



**ABOVE:** Jenny Balcom receives a key to the city of Goldendale after completing the six World Marathon Majors. **TOP:** Jenny, right, in the light blue shirt, ran the London Marathon this year. PHOTOS COURTESY OF JENNY BALCOM

“She is my star that never burns out,” he says. “To witness her determination and grit firsthand was awe-inspiring. I am incredibly proud of her. She is my hero.” ■



# Lexi Molnar: Presidential Scholar

## Goldendale High Grad Achieves National Honor

Graduating from Goldendale High School, local student Lexi Molnar has achieved one of the highest honors a high school senior can receive: she has been named a 2024 U.S. Presidential Scholar.

“I feel honored to have received this recognition,” Lexi says. “My hard work, dedication and sacrifices have paid off, and I’m thankful for the opportunities this award brings.”

Lexi’s achievements extend beyond the classroom. Two years ago, she launched her own custom sugar cookie business, Cookies By Lexi, right here in our community.

“I’ve learned so much from starting my own business,” she says. “This experience has influenced my decision to pursue a degree in business administration, giving me invaluable skills in customer service, multitasking and business management.”

Balancing her academic responsibilities with extracurricular activities and running a business was no small feat.

“Education has always been a top priority,” Lexi says.

Her ability to manage these commitments comes from strong multitasking skills and effective time management.

“Writing down tasks and managing time efficiently has been crucial,” she adds.

Lexi’s involvement in organizations like Future Business Leaders of America, FFA and 4-H has significantly contributed to her personal and professional growth. Holding leadership positions, including All Student Body president and FBLA president, she has developed skills such as public speaking, teamwork and technological proficiency.

“These clubs and advisors have pushed me to be outgoing and involved,” she says.

Her dedication to community service is another standout aspect of her high school career. Lexi has accumulated more than 150 service hours, participating in initiatives like Backpacks 4 Kids—which provides food for local children—and volunteering at soup kitchens.

“These experiences have shown me the impact one can have by donating time to local causes,” she says.

Lexi advises incoming high school freshmen to also get involved and join clubs, and to work hard for what they are



**Lexi Molnar started her own business—Cookies By Lexi—while still attending Goldendale High School.** PHOTO COURTESY OF LEXI MOLNAR

passionate about.

“Set high goals and believe in yourself,” she says.

Lexi also manages a small herd cattle operation. With guidance from experienced beef producers, she has embraced agricultural entrepreneurship, particularly enjoying the breeding process.

“It’s exciting to see the calves grow and develop,” she says.

Outside of academics, business and agriculture, Lexi’s passion lies in rodeo. She competes in breakaway roping and goat tying, showcasing her dedication and skill in horsemanship. Her participation in the county fair over the years further highlights her commitment to agriculture and community.

As Lexi prepares to attend Oregon State University to study business and agriculture, she looks forward to exploring how these fields intersect.

“I hope to make a large impact in whichever direction I go,” she says. ■