

Reasons to Run

ERIN SPRAGUE '05 has one goal: to run seven marathons, on seven continents, and raise money for seven charities. And in the process, she hopes to set a world record.

A varsity distance runner at Harvard, Sprague has been working 80-hour weeks as a financial analyst with the Black-

stone Group in New York City. She loves her job, but says she found herself missing the rush of competing: "I realized I needed to run."

That passion has evolved into In The Running (www.intherunning.org), a nonprofit organization dedicated to raising money for grassroots charities around the globe. Sprague and four friends, including

Mahmoud Youssef '05, Ahmed Yearwood '05, and Celene Menschel '04, founded the group in September 2006 after deciding that they could link her seven-marathon quest to raising money for a charity on each continent. "It's something that developed very organically from my interest in running," Sprague says. "We thought we should do something greater with my goal than just setting a personal record."

They quickly learned, she reports, that "setting up the organization [involved] more legwork than the running." They wanted to find seven deserving, locally focused charities that might have been overshadowed by better-known groups. They considered hundreds of charities, read dozens of news articles, compared websites, interviewed executives from several organizations, and even called former professors for advice. Eventually they whittled the list down to the Silver Lining Foundation (which promotes Aboriginal advancement in Australia), the Polaris Project (which combats human trafficking in Asia), the Kenya Network for Women with AIDS (which strives to improve the quality of life for infected women and their chil-

dren), the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition (which works to preserve Antarctica's ecosystem), A Drop in the Ocean (which seeks to help the world's poorest people, many of whom live in South America), Co-operation Ireland (which aims to create a better relationship between Northern Ireland

and the Republic of Ireland), and Girls on the Run, which uses running to help young North American women build self-esteem.

But Sprague also has her own goal: to be the youngest person in the world to run a marathon on each continent. (The current female record-holder earned her title at 30; the youngest man was nine days short of

his twenty-fifth birthday). That is what forces her out of bed at 6 A.M. for pre-work runs and eats up weekend hours as she pounds the Manhattan pavement to get in her long runs.

Sprague took her first steps toward her goal last October, when she ran the Beijing Marathon. This year, she has completed races in Orlando, Florida (in January), in Moshi, Tanzania (in March), and in São Paulo, Brazil (in June); she runs the Dublin Marathon in October. Next March she runs in Antarctica, and in July, it's the Gold Coast Marathon in Australia.

Once she crosses that finish line, she'll be—at 24 years, eight months—the youngest person ever to have run "seven on seven." But that won't stop either her or In The Running, which has raised \$10,000 since it began fundraising in May. "When I first started this, I wondered how I could raise enough money to be impactful," says Sprague, who has already set her sights on running a 55-mile super-marathon. "But then we realized that's not the right focus. We want to continue to inspire people to do what they can, even if it's just giving a dollar. That dollar could help feed someone." ~LAURA M. COLARUSSO



COURTESY OF IN THE RUNNING