

Brain injury survivor to run in 5K

Whisman 'had to relearn how to do everything'

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The Courier-Journal

After suffering brain trauma from a car accident 10 years ago, Kasey Whisman could not walk or talk.

With extensive rehabilitation and training, Whisman, 27, is now not only talking but also running, and supporting others who have suffered brain trauma while doing it.

Whisman will run in the Brain Injury Alliance of Kentucky Brain Walk on May 12 with a mission: to prove everyone — including herself — wrong.

"I thought I could never do it," Whisman said.

On Oct. 27, 2002, Whisman, then a 17-year-old senior at Shelby County High School, got off work and decided to "have a little fun" by standing on the hood of a moving car. While "car surfing" in her employer's parking lot, Whisman fell off the car and suffered major brain trauma.

Because of the injury, her body lost all functionality, and she spent eight months in rehabilitation.

"I had to relearn how to do everything: hold my head up, sit, stand, walk, talk," she said.

Whisman, who now lives off Hurstbourne Parkway near Interstate 64, said she had no strength or balance on her right side and could not understand written words, despite once being an honor student in high school.

"It was frustrating to not be able to spell a simple word," she said.

Pushups and leg-lifts have since replaced rehabilitation woes as Whisman's most frustrating activities. She began training at Baptist East Milestone Wellness Center in St. Matthews two years ago with



Kasey Whisman underwent 11 surgeries after suffering a brain injury when she was 17. Now the 27-year-old is an occupational therapist and works out five days a week. PHOTOS BY MATT STONE/THE COURIER-JOURNAL



Personal trainer Allison Cardoza keeps a watchful eye on Whisman during a workout session.

trainer Alison Cardoza in an effort to lose weight.

"She'll tell it to me straight if there's something she doesn't like or I won't do," Whisman said of Cardoza.

Cardoza said her time train-

ing with Whisman has blossomed into a great friendship. That friendship, along with daily workouts, has helped grow Whisman's confidence, Cardoza said.

"She's a beautiful person in-

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BRAIN WALK

» The Brain Walk will be held May 12 at the Belvedere in downtown Louisville. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. The Walk begins at 10 a.m. Go to <http://www.biak.us/> to register.

side and out," Cardoza said.

Whisman earned a degree from Jefferson Community and Technical College in 2009 and works as a licensed occupational therapy assistant at Norton Healthcare downtown. She is also engaged to be married, and her fiance plans on participating in the 5K too.

"He'll probably walk," Whisman said.

In preparation for the 5K, Whisman runs every day, and tries to hit the three-mile mark at least once a week. She also

lifts weights and does crunches, pushups and thrusts.

Since she started training at Milestone, she has lost 60 pounds and continues to lose weight. She decided to run in the 5K in December after walking in it the past three years.

The Brain Injury Alliance of Kentucky Brain Walk raises money for brain trauma victims. Dawne Gee, a brain tumor survivor and WAVE-3 News co-anchor, will emcee Saturday's walk, which starts at the Belvedere and goes on a path through downtown.

Whisman said she hopes her ability to run the 5K will send a message to brain trauma survivors like her.

"Don't let anyone ever tell you you can't do something," she said.

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