

TELLING STORY

How One Runner Reclaimed Her Passion at the JCC

Finding a *passion* in life doesn't always come easy. But Gabrielle Panepinto Reiser, who moved to Tenafly as a teen in the late 1980s, was lucky enough to find hers at the young age of 14. Always athletic, Gabrielle joined her high school track team, became an ardent runner, and went on to run track all through college. After graduating, she discovered the thrill of long-distance running, and began training for marathons. She ran her first in Dublin and ran the NYC Marathon a few years later. In 2004, Gabrielle married Dan, who's become a serious runner himself, and today – twelve years and four sons later – the entire family is devoted to running, fitness, and personal well-being, which they enjoy pursuing together at the JCC.

Gabrielle credits her family, her hometown high school and the Kaplen JCC on the Palisades for her running achievements. As a teen, she and her three siblings came to the "J" for a myriad of after school programs. Gabrielle had such warm memories of growing up in Tenafly, and the good times and great activities she experienced at the JCC that when it came time for her and Dan to choose a place to

settle with their family, they naturally chose Tenafly. "One of the first things I did when we moved back to the area, was of course, join the JCC," shared Gabrielle.

"It felt great to be back, where I could raise my children in the community I knew and loved so well," says Gabrielle. "Family is everything to me, and after having four sons back-to-back, it's no surprise that running had to take a back seat for a while. But it was such a fundamental part of who I was, I yearned to get back to it."

Gabrielle was ready to set herself new goals and to find ways to shorten her race times. After being selected to be on FinKraft, an endurance sports team, her coach, Roger Aspholm, advised her that just running was not enough to take her to the next level and recommended she go to the JCC for its extensive, multifunctional training facility, equipment and professional trainers. Gabrielle shares "I began training with Kimani and Hagit, two of the most motivating and inspiring trainers ever, and took virtually every kind of class and conditioning they recommended and the center had to offer."

“With the encouragement of the incredible health and wellness team, I began to see immediate results,” Gabrielle explains. “I took spin and fusion classes, circuit training, lifted weights and utilized the inside track. Soon after, I began adding barre classes and yoga to my workout regimen because they told me that these low impact options would enhance my performance in ways I may not have imagined. They were right. These classes definitely reduced my risks for injury. My strength and endurance increased, and as a result of their expert advice, I started running faster than I ever had.”

Confident and determined, Gabrielle began competing in the JCC annual Rubin Run. For years, she ran the 10K and 5K back-to-back in record time, and in 2012, when the JCC added its first ½ marathon, Gabrielle placed first for women with an incredible 1-hour, 41-minute run. More recently, she's continued to up her game, with the guidance and nuanced knowledge she gets from the JCC fitness team allowing her to keep raising her own personal bar. She has fine-tuned herself as a competitive athlete and has dropped her ½ marathon time by 6 minutes and her full marathon by 22 minutes. Back as a serious contender, she recently placed 3rd in her age group for the highly-competitive Steamtown Marathon and qualified for this year's Boston Marathon, which she would not have accomplished without the help of the "J."



As if her days aren't packed enough, Gabrielle also shares her motivational journey, her training progress and provides recipes, advice and tips to inspire others to pursue healthy diets and lifestyles on her blog runcooklaugh.com.

"After 10 years of carrying little babies wherever I went, my arms are finally free, and I am once again giving running my all," says Gabrielle. "But equally important, as I watch my boys grow, my greatest ambition is to pass my passion for health and fitness on to them. And it's been working like a charm. They are at the "J" almost as frequently as I am – and I'm there all the time. They take Hip Hop classes, play soccer and basketball, and attend the *Neil Klatskin Day Camp*. They also study piano at the Thurnauer School of Music. And we run as a family in the Rubin Run, something we plan to do each year as a Mother's Day tradition. I can't tell you how happy this makes me because the JCC is a place that carries so many positive memories from my own youth and where I have achieved so many of my own greatest goals."

Hagit Tal, the JCC Group Exercise Director, has been motivating Gabrielle to reach new heights for 5 years. "It is so rewarding to work with people like Gabrielle who make personal wellbeing a priority."

“Every member of our health and wellness team takes great pride in seeing people achieve their fitness goals, and if they doubt themselves or think they are reaching for something that is not realistically attainable, we do everything possible to give them the confidence to believe they can achieve anything they set their mind to. Gabrielle is a believer and achiever and we are all so proud to be a witness to all her many passions and successes!"

PHOTO LEFT: Gabrielle training with Hagit Tal
PHOTO BOTTOM LEFT: Gabrielle running
PHOTO TOP RIGHT: Gabrielle with her husband, Dan, and children William, 11; Ondrej, 8; Joseph, 6; and Daniel, 3.

