



Carrie Gregory (left) and Sandra Cottleau (right) running together in 2020 at the KV Marathon in New Brunswick, where they both first qualified for the Boston Marathon

In celebration of this year's 20th annual Prince Edward Island Marathon, we have embraced the opportunity of these articles to bring light to people who inspire us. This week we are featuring how we inspire each other! We have been running with together for many years, inspiring each other to run faster and farther, while having so much fun along the way.

The beginning of our running really started with our parents, Brooke and Dorothy Gregory. They had previously run in their "younger years" and got back into it when we were in our teens. Dorothy would run around the Stonepark soccer field when we had soccer practice. Sandra used to run laps after practice and soon found that she would rather run on the track than play soccer. Eventually, starting to build up more distance, Sandra and Dorothy would walk to the start of an old race route called the "Sherwood Mile", and they would run laps of the mile loop together. It didn't take long for running to become a routine activity for the family. In 2007 Dorothy, Brooke, and Sandra started going in local road races, and a few years later Carrie got the running itch too.

In 1982 our mom, Dorothy, started running road races after our neighbour, Judy West, invited her to one. Our competitive dad thought he should be able to run faster than our mom, so he started training himself. With practice, they both improved in the sport, so much so that Dorothy received the Rookie Female of the Year in the PEI Roadrunners club in 1984. Brooke, with his impressive ability to dig deep, also had some impressive race times. Fast forward 40+ years later and they are both still running!

Sandra has been running since Elementary school, but got into longer distances and road racing at the age of 14, including competing recreationally in cross country and track & field throughout school. Sandra has participated in countless road races over the last 17 years and completed a total of 26 full marathons. The PEI Marathon has become an annual event, which Sandra has completed every year since 2009. Sandra was the female winner of the PEI Marathon in 2022 and 2023. She certainly has a wide variety of finishing times, but always has fun no matter the speed.

Carrie has completed 19 full marathons, including the PEI Marathon 10 times. Carrie ran the PEI Half Marathon for 5 years before having the courage to complete a full, and she ran the PEI Marathon 7 times before she was able to run her goal of a sub 4 hour marathon. She once said she would never run fast enough to qualify for Boston, and now has run 8 marathons with time to spare under her qualifying time. Carrie has been successful in many local road races, and enjoys volunteering as a Pace Bunny to help others reach their goals.

As sisters, we're fortunate to have many opportunities to run races together. We have both completed 100KM at Keji's Backyard ultra, a 100KM "fun run" during COVID, a 60KM run from Charlottetown to Summerside in memory of Jacob Simmons, W4 Backyard ultra, and several marathons. We both ran the Boston Marathon in 2022 and 2023. Having each other to run with certainly makes it easier. To incorporate strength training, we attend fitness classes together weekly at the Spa Total Fitness Center. We help keep each other accountable for our training, while sharing lessons and tips we've learned along the way.

We have the power to create our own stories, and we are happy that the PEI Marathon is a big part of ours. Sandra took running a few laps around a gravel track as a teenager to being the top female at the PEI Marathon for the last two years. It took Carrie 17 years to run her fastest race times. But, it's not about destination, it's about the journey we're still on that we enjoy. Although there may be a bit of friendly competition from time to time, there is no better way to share running memories than with family. For those participating in any of the PEI Marathon events next week, we encourage you all to have fun - it is a time to celebrate all that hard training. There is nothing more fun than making your goals a reality!

Tagline: Sisters Sandra Cotreau and Carrie Gregory will be writing a weekly column in The Guardian leading up to the 20th Annual P.E.I Marathon Weekend on Oct. 20.



Brooke Gregory (left) running with his wife Dorothy Gregory (right) at the 2013 Harvest Festival 25km