

Jenna (Carlson) Jenkins

1991

Inducted in 2019



Jenna was born in Iowa and moved to Grants Pass at an early age. She attended Lincoln Elementary, North Middle School, and Grants Pass High School. Her freshman year, her parents told her she had to either try out for volleyball or join the cross-country team. Without any prior experience or interest in running, and with no expectations for the upcoming season, Jenna chose cross-country.

In her very first race, in Brookings, Oregon, Jenna placed 4th and was hooked. The race was 3000m and was the farthest distance she had ever run. Jenna recalls "It was the hardest thing I had ever done up until that time...Of all the races I've run since that time, this is the race I remember the most. I remember crossing the finish line with nothing left. I surprised myself so much and remember thinking that maybe I could do this running thing and not be so bad."

This was the start of a very successful running career. Jenna lettered all four years in both cross-country and track. She was the District Champion in Cross-Country in 1988, 1989, and 1990. Jenna was the cross-country runner-up at State in 1990 and the State Champion in 1991. She was also the Cross-Country National Jr. Olympic Champion in 1990. In track, Jenna was a 3-time District Champion in both the 1500m and 3000m (1988, 1989, and 1990). She was also the State Champion in both the 1500 and 3000 in 1990. Jenna held the school record in the 800, 1500, and 3000 - until her sister Tara, broke them the following year.

Jenna received a scholarship to run for the University of Oregon where she was a 3 time All American; cross-country (1993,1995) and track (3000 in 1995). Jenna was the Pac 10 and West Region runner-up in cross-country in 1995 and helped her team earn several Pac-10 titles and two top 5 finishes at Nationals.

After graduating with a degree in Psychology and Special Education, Jenna spent a year in Seattle, where she coached, earned her teaching degree in Special Education, and married Rick Jenkins (also from GPHS). They moved to Grants Pass for a few years and then to Portland before moving to Camas Washington, where they currently live. Through the years Jenna has worked as a teacher and a coach but her greatest role and achievement in life has been being a mom to her four kids; Emma, Halle, Evan, and Maci.

After college, Jenna did not run for about 15 years, Jenna found her way back to running during a battle with cancer – as an escape that provided a sense of control when everything else was out of control. Cancer free for nearly 12 years, Jenna is still running and has even run a couple of marathons.

"It's hard to believe that my journey with running began as a freshman in high school, in Brookings, Oregon."