



Tara (Carlson) Wikstrom **Class of 1992**

Tara Carlson was born June 1st, 1974, in Smith Center, Kansas. Her family moved to Grants Pass in 1976. She attended Lincoln Elementary School, North Middle School, and Grants Pass High School. She started running because her 5th grade teacher, Mr. Nick Martin, and her middle school PE teacher, Ms. Joyce Loomis, recognized her talent and encouraged her to sign up for cross-country and track in high school. Her dad also encouraged her by training and running with her in local road races.

She had a successful high school running career at Grants Pass High School as a 4-year letterman in both cross country and track, winning District championships in the 1500 and 3000 (1992), two State championships in the 1500 meters (1991 and 1992) and runner up in the 3000 meters (1991) in track and gained all-state honors for cross country (1990 and 1991). In 1992, Tara had state best times in the 800, 1500, and 3000 and set school records in those events: 800 (2:16.0), 1500 (4:39.81) and 3000 (10:08.60). After more than 30 years, Tara still holds the school records in the 1500 and 3000 meters. In addition to her outstanding performances, Tara was a team captain in both cross country and track her senior seasons, and earned Most Inspirational Athlete (1990), Best Track Athlete (1990), and Most Outstanding Track Athlete (1992). She placed 4th in the National Junior Olympic Championships in cross country and was an Honorable Mention Team selection for cross country by USA Today in 1991.

Tara went on to run collegiately at the University of Washington (1992-1995) where she qualified for the National Championship in cross country 4 years and track 3 years, earning All-American honors in both sports, 3 years. She was the University of Washington Women's Cross Country Athlete of the Year twice (1994 and 1995). Tara represented the USA at the 1993 Junior World Cross Country Championships in Spain and qualified and ran at the 1996 Olympic Trials in Atlanta, Georgia. At the end of her collegiate career, Tara was awarded the PAC 10 Conference Medal for achievement in athletics, academics, and leadership. Tara ran one year post-collegiately for Asics and competed in the US National Cross Country Championships in Boston.

When Tara's running career ended, she focused on her graduate program. She earned her Master's degree in Speech-Language Pathology at University of Washington in 1998 and moved to Vancouver, Washington where she married Eric Wikstrom. She worked as a speech language pathologist for 4 years, working in the Camas School District. Tara has four children; Olivia, Lucas, Kate, and Henry. She moved to Bainbridge Island, Washington to raise her family and now currently lives in Ridgefield, Washington.