



## **Claudia Cardenas, girlfriend of a fallen soldier, shares her story with the Portland Marathon.**

Below is a letter written by Claudia Cardenas of Portland, Oregon. Cardenas is running the 2009 Portland Marathon to honor her boyfriend, fallen soldier Jason Vinyard, and all fallen soldiers. Cardenas hopes her story will inspire others to join her this Oct. 4 at the Portland Marathon to support her efforts and raise money for the Wounded Warrior Project.

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My boyfriend Jason Vinyard who served in the military for almost 20 years passed away unexpectedly on June 12, 2009.

Running the Portland Marathon is something that Jason and I had planned on doing together and since he passed away I will finish the mission that Jason and I started. I will now run the Portland Marathon to honor Jason Vinyard and the rest of the Fallen Soldiers who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom.



Losing Jason was an extremely difficult loss for me. I loved him beyond words. He was a man of honor, one of kind. His loss shook me to the core, as you might imagine the first weeks were extremely difficult. Then, on June 28, 2009 something compelled me to start training again. I had been in a car and pedestrian accident on April 1, 2009, and I had to stop training for the marathon. My shoulder is in constant pain, but the pain that I feel from Jason's loss is greater than any physical pain I may ever experience.

From the first step that I gave I could almost hear Jason cheering me on with a big smile. Step by step I have started to heal and each step leads me to a new journey. As I had started to search for answers and my purpose in life, all that kept coming to mind is to get involved in a cause that honored/helped the soldiers of our country.

In my journey to run the Portland Marathon, which is dedicated to Jason Vinyard and all the other Fallen Soldiers, I started to reach out to others to join me Oct. 4. I want to invite people in the community to show support by attending the event to cheer on walkers and runners, by keeping our soldiers in their thoughts/prayers, or by making a donation to the Wounded Warrior Project ([www.woundedwarriorproject.org](http://www.woundedwarriorproject.org)) or other causes that help soldiers. Some people say that one person can't make a difference, I strongly disagree.

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For more information on how you can support the troops at this year's Portland Marathon, please visit [http://www.portlandmarathon.org/iraq\\_half.php](http://www.portlandmarathon.org/iraq_half.php). This September the Portland Marathon will host three half marathon events in Iraq for Oregon and Washington based troops. The Portland Marathon will also have special, commemorative "support our troops" bibs available for purchase at the Sports Authority Sports & Fitness Expo. Proceeds from these bibs will be donated to the Wounded Warrior Project.

The Portland Marathon will be held Sunday, Oct. 4 at 7AM in downtown Portland. The event includes a 26.2 walk/run, 5-miler walk/run, a 10k Mayor's Walk, and a kids' Marafun. The Sports and Fitness Expo will be held on Oct. 2 and 3rd at the Hilton Hotel, 921 SW 6th Ave.

The Portland Marathon, a non-profit organization, is dedicated to the health and wellness of its participants and community. More than 12,000 people run, walk, or volunteer with the event each year. Proceeds from event go to help local schools, charities, and non-profits. The event has been called the "best-organized marathon in North America" and has received national attention for being one of the first eco-friendly, "green" marathons. Sponsors for the 2009 Portland Marathon include: Sports Authority, exclusive Sports & Fitness Expo sponsor; Kaiser Permanente, 5-miler title sponsor. For more information, visit [www.portlandmarathon.org](http://www.portlandmarathon.org), call (503) 226-1111, or e-mail [info@portlandmarathon.org](mailto:info@portlandmarathon.org).

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