

# PERSEVERANCE

Fear. Obstacles. Uncertainty. Pride. Confidence. Hope. These are the roller coaster of emotions I've been experiencing as I train for the Sean O'Brien 50K Trail Run on February 6, 2016. Why did I say yes to a 31-mile mountain run with an elevation climb of 6,500 feet? I thought it would be good for me in this stage of my life to accomplish something outrageous that was just for me. After nine weeks of training, however, I've found another purpose that's quite close to me for taking on this hike. **I'm doing this for the families at The Guidance Center.** The emotional toll of the training has triggered many parallels in my mind about what our families go through when they come to The Guidance Center and begin their therapeutic process.

I don't want to trivialize our children's experiences and hardships by comparing them to an optional race I signed up for just for the heck of it. For me this is about persevering through personal life challenges and when I think about perseverance and toughness, I think about the families we serve. **I hope you'll follow me on this journey as I update you with my emotional and physical progress leading up to race day.**

Some weeks I feel confident and some weeks I feel like I'm a failure. I ask myself questions like, "Why did I sign up? Why am I doing this? How much food and water do I carry?" It's just a race, but it's truly been an emotional roller coaster. I can do this. I can't do this. I got this. No I don't. And some weeks I do have some considerable setbacks. One setback was during a practice run where I was hit by a mountain bike and broke my rib where the biker hit me with his handle bars. It literally knocked me in the bushes! But I knew I had to get back on my feet. I had to run another 10 miles to get out of the mountains.

Another setback in particular made me think of our Guidance Center families. I was running down a very narrow part of the trail, which was rocky, sandy, and steep. I stumbled over a big rock and almost lost my footing. It scared me. **It was in that moment I had the epiphany that this process parallels what our clients' experience.**

My near stumble reminded me of the therapeutic process. You start out, and it's quite a lot of work. There are rocks in the road, and it's really steep sometimes or you feel like you're going too fast and you might topple and you want to give up. It resonated with me that in some ways I could do this in honor of our clients. I recognize how hard their path is and how hard they have to work when they come to The Guidance Center. They have to be brave and push forward even though it's a difficult journey. **They inspired me to keep going, so in my heart I'm doing this for them.**

The great thing is I've developed a very close bond with my training partners, Matt, Erick and Cyndi. Here again lies a parallel with the work of The Guidance Center. Our children and their therapists develop a tremendous bond. For some, our therapists become role models and a primary support system for the children we see. And just how my training team supports one another, our therapists support our clients during each and every step of their own journey.

Whenever I'm out there and it gets hard, I think about these parallels. I want you to know that I have *no* idea if I'm going to be able to finish on race day. I've never done anything like this. I've never considered myself an athlete. We'll see if I finish. I'm trying. I'm not quitting. Throughout these updates, I want you to think of the nearly 3,000 clients we serve each year. I want you to think of how brave they are for coming to The Guidance Center, how scared they may be entering their very first therapy session, and how committed they are to their healing process and wanting to feel better. **Regardless of my outcome on February 6, I will come out of that race with a sense of hope and positivity.** It is that same hope and positivity our clients have after accomplishing their own difficult and often rocky path during their healing process. Our clients are truly an inspiration of strength and courage to be recognized. I will be looking up to their display of bravery as I seek to find my own in continuing training for this race!

Warmly,



Patricia Costales, LCSW  
Executive Director