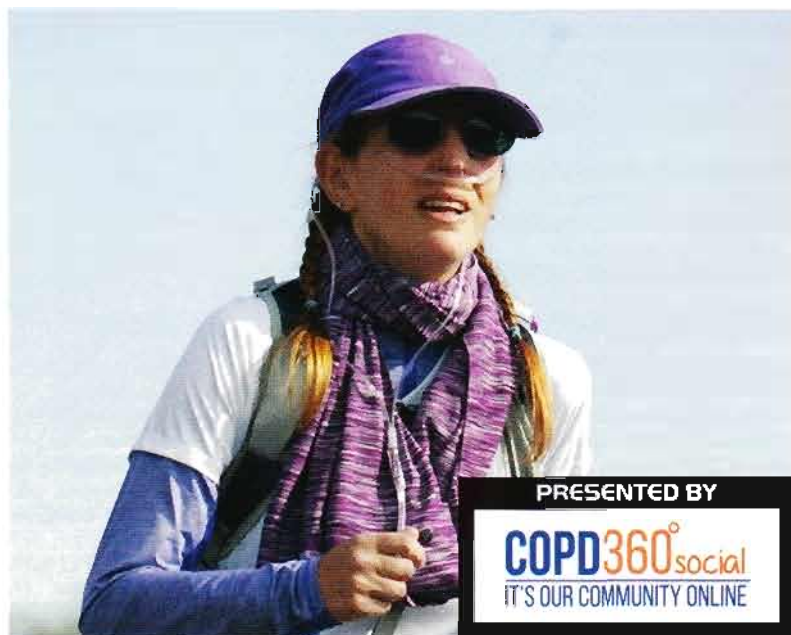


Running On Air

KITLOWSKI ADVOCATES FOR COPD, LUNG DISEASES

Mary Kitlowski had plans to try out for her high school volleyball team the day after she received a diagnosis of Primary Ciliary Dyskinesia, a rare genetic lung disease similar to COPD.



While the diagnosis came with the news that there is no cure for PCD and Kitlowski would be affected by the disease for the rest of her life, she refused to change her plans for the next day.

"My mom said she didn't want me playing until we knew more about what this was," Kitlowski said. "I was furious. I'd been doing this my whole life. Why wouldn't I be able to play?"

"It never occurred to me that this would ever get in the way. I'm hard-headed, so the best way to get me to do something is to tell

me I can't do it."

Kitlowski played volleyball that season and later became an avid runner. That is, until 2001 when a debilitating lung infection brought her active lifestyle to a halt.

In 2013, Kitlowski received a new lease on life when her doctor prescribed oxygen so she could return to running. While the stationary tanks of oxygen helped Kitlowski after she exercised, she felt the experience could have been improved with access to a portable oxygen container.

"I need this for

running, and sending me off with a tank that's plugged in at the house - it's not going to stretch around the neighborhood," Kitlowski said. "I was very persistent in finding a portable, battery-operated oxygen container. I feel like I don't get as exhausted from it. My oxygen levels recover faster. Now, it's not like I get home and can't function for the rest of the day."

The portable oxygen allowed Kitlowski to build her endurance. In September 2014, she ran a 5K with a portable oxygen concentrator on her back. In May of

this year, she ran a half marathon along the Potomac River in her home state of Maryland.

Last October, Kitlowski started the Running On Air campaign designed to educate others about lung diseases and inspire those who use oxygen to live full and vibrant lives. As part of her campaign, Kitlowski has become an advocate for COPD due in part to the experience of her mother-in-law, who died in April after battling COPD and other health issues.

"Her oxygen company was telling her they would only send 20 tanks a month," Kitlowski said. "That's like a regular doctor saying, 'I know you need a 30-day supply of medicine, but it's too expensive for us, so we're going to give you medicine for 20 days.'"

"She became homebound because she was scared of going out without enough oxygen," Kitlowski said. "If you start doing less, your lung function is worse. That whole cycle contributed to a faster decline, and I know she's not the only one." ▲

RUNNING ON AIR RAISES AWARENESS

Mary Kitlowski's Running On Air campaign has helped raise awareness for various lung diseases, including COPD.

COPD is a life-threatening lung disease, the fourth-leading cause of death globally, and affects more than 300 million individuals worldwide. Within the United States, COPD ranks as the third-leading cause of death, with more than 24 million Americans affected and approximately half that number remaining undiagnosed. However, a simple, painless breathing test, called spirometry, can determine whether or not a person has COPD.

Through the Running On Air website, RunningOnAir.org, and the Facebook page, Kitlowski has spread awareness about her cause. She also has a goal to run in all 50 states; she will have crossed eight off the list by the end of this year.

Kitlowski was also recently a finalist in a cover competition for the magazine, "Runner's World," which has a monthly circulation of 105,000. The publication was looking for the "Most Awesome" runner to be on the cover of the December issue. While Kitlowski didn't win, her exposure in the final 10 gave COPD and other lung diseases much-needed exposure.

"I definitely feel a connection with anyone with lung distress," Kitlowski said. "Thousands of patients are restricted but need to have good care and live active and productive lives. I'm not sure they're always hearing about the inspirational stories and it's my goal to spread that message."

BY DAN GUTTENPLAN



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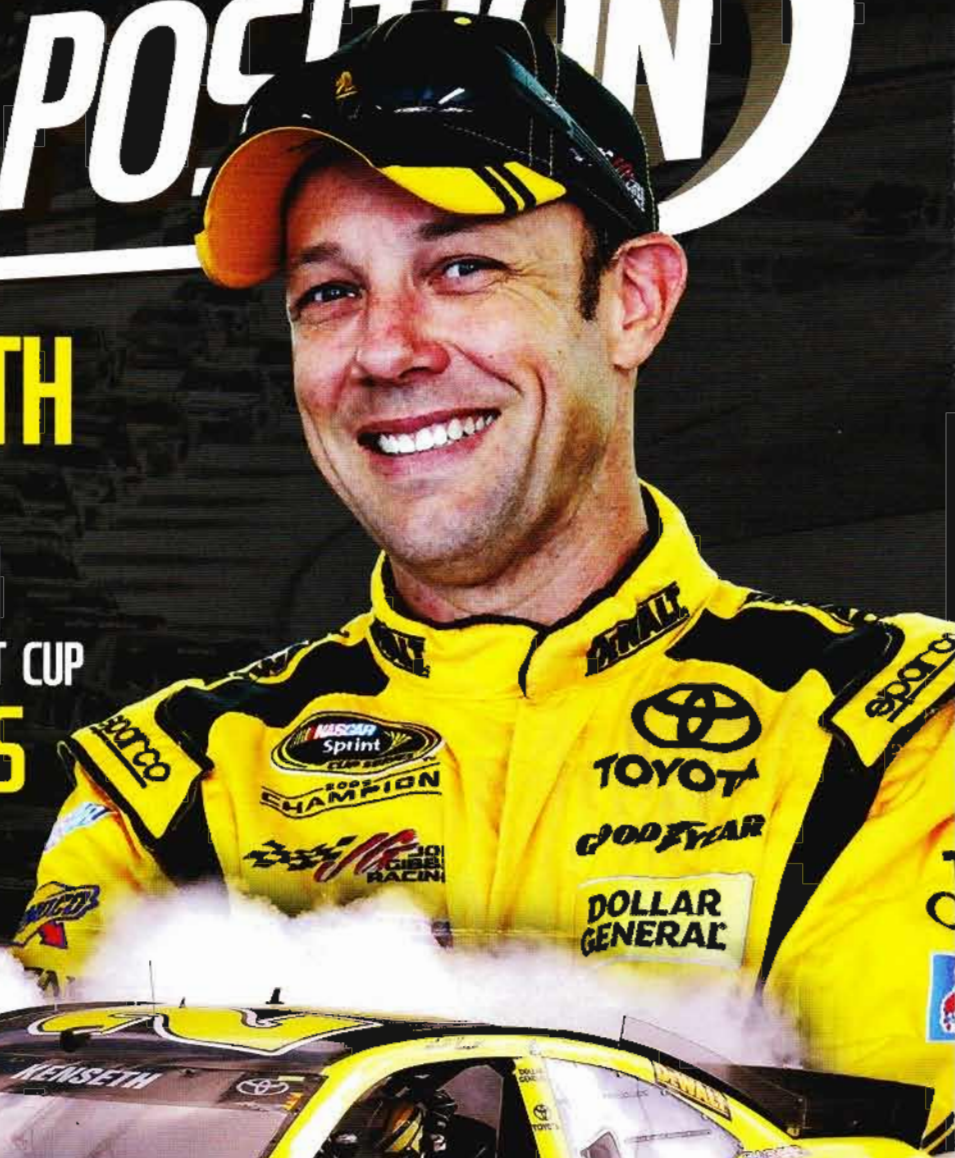
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