

Virginia woman aims to run in every state, every continent

By Gene Myers Detroit Free Press Sports Editor Filed Under Sports Detroit Free Press Marathon
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How's this for a bucket list:

Marathons in Antarctica and five other continents, including along the Great Wall of China and in the outback of Australia. Marathons in 39 states, including a personal-best 3:09:14 in the 2009 Steamtown Marathon in Scranton, Pa.

But that's only part of the amazing journey of Brooke Curran that will take her to the starting line before sunrise Sunday for the 35th Detroit Free Press/Talmer Bank Marathon.

Every runner has a reason for lacing 'em up, but few have as many as Curran, 44, has had the past 15 years.

Her story starts in her late 20s, when, as a stay-at-home mother of three daughters under the age of 5, she decided she needed "to get out of the house." So she did something she had never done: Ran for a few miles.

"I needed fresh air, peace and quiet," Curran said. "It made me a better mother."

Then came the Sept. 11 attacks. Curran lives in Alexandria, Va., and as she sat with her daughters, they could see smoke rising from the Pentagon. She had a "fragility of life" moment. She decided to attack something on her bucket list -- run 26.2 miles.

In October 2004, she did the [Marine Corps](#)

Marathon in 4 hours, 24 minutes. She liked the marathon, she hated her time. So she decided to keep  running and to improve.

Both happened. She started finishing high in her age group. But she said even after all the training and successful races, she found herself left with an empty feeling.

So in the spring of 2009, she decided to tie her running with fund-raising. She founded RunningBrooke (www.runningbrooke.com), which she said has raised \$150,000 for nearby charities supporting at-risk children and working poor families. As part of her mission, she made a commitment to run a marathon in all 50 states and the seven continents.

Soon after, during a training session on a track, Curran nearly collapsed with a painful burning in her chest and shortness of breath. She had been bothered with breathing issues from time to time but didn't think much about it. This time, she received a diagnosis that floored her: asthma and exercise-induced bronchospasm (EIB).

"I thought my running career was over," she said. "It was a crushing blow -- until I understood it was a treatable thing."

That just gave her another mission. She started speaking on behalf of the Allergy and Asthma Network/Mothers of Asthmatics -- even on Capitol Hill -- and became a member of its board of directors.

Besides raising money by racing, she tries to raise awareness of asthma and EIB, encourage people to

seek treatment and inspire suffers -- estimates put 30 million in the U.S. with EIB issues -- that they can [stay active](#)

and chase their fitness dreams.



She recommends checking out www.EIBActive.com, sponsored by the asthma inhaler ProAir, which features her story, her blog, advice for asthma and EIB diagnosis and treatment, and tips for exercising.

"I want to talk to everybody about this," she said. "I dropped my fastest marathon and half-marathon times post diagnosis. It really proves that asthma doesn't have to get in your way."

Back to the bucket list. Curran will check off Michigan as her 40th state, in her 52nd marathon. Why the Free Press/Talmer Bank Marathon? "I needed Michigan," she said, "and I hear great things about your marathon. ... It has a great reputation out there in the running community."

She never stops running, averaging 75-80 miles on her hard weeks, although a good deal could be in the pool if she feels "tweaky," although she "feels very lucky" to have never had injury problems. She also swims and does [yoga](#)

, twice a week, to stay safe.



Curran averages a marathon a month and, by knocking off Africa along the way, intends to be finished with her every-state, every-continent [quest](#)

by next October. (She won the women's division in her South American and Antarctic marathons.)



And then what?

"I'm actively searching for that next physical test," she said. "Maybe it's climbing all the top peaks in all the continents. ... Maybe it's an Ironman. ..."

"I'm a runner at heart, and I won't stop running."

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More Details: In the long run

What: 35th Detroit Free Press/Talmer Bank Marathon.

When: 6:58 a.m. Sunday.

Where: Streets of Detroit and Windsor. Marathon starts and ends downtown at Fort and Second, near the Free Press building and DoubleTree Hotel.

Races and sponsors: Greektown Marathon, Metro Detroit Chevy Dealers Half-Marathons (international and U.S.), five-person relay, American Home Fitness 5K run/walk.

Schedule:

6:58 a.m. — Disabilities division. **7 a.m.** — Marathon, international half-marathon, relay (wave start in which 11 groups go off in 2-minute intervals). **7:25 a.m.** — 5K run/walk (start on Lafayette at Washington).

11 a.m. — U.S. half (start on Congress at Beaubien).

Before the race: Health and Fitness Expo, Cobo Center, 3-8 p.m. Friday, 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Saturday. Packet pickup, 90-plus exhibitors of apparel, footwear, gadgets, nutrition. No charge. Open to general public.

During the race: Track runners' progress and search results on the race's free app, recently updated and enhanced. It also provides course maps, aid stations, FAQs and merchandise. (Search for "Detroit Marathon" in the iTunes Store or Android Market, or use these QR codes on your smartphone.)

After the race: Conquered: The Official Marathon Afterparty, Lafayette between Third and Lodge Service Drive (one block north from finish), 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Sunday. Music, food, interactive games, beer after noon. No charge. Open to general public.

Information, updates and social media:

Race w

ebsite — freepmarathon.com. **Live coverage** — freep.com. **Twitter** — [@freepmarathon](https://twitter.com/freepmarathon). **Instagram** — [@freepmarathon](https://www.instagram.com/freepmarathon). **Facebook** — facebook.com/detroitmarathon.