

Drumroll Please

Written by Jes-c Brandt

Mission accomplished



It's that time of year when fresh graduates are flitting about everywhere. What could be a better reminder that life after graduation is different?

How's that for a "no, duh" statement? Of course life changes after graduating, but I've been done with college for two years, and I'm still occasionally puzzled by how different my life is now than it used to be.

For 20 years, my life was made up of one concrete goal after another. Turn in each assignment on time. Complete a year of school. Graduate from high school. Graduate from college. There was always some clear objective, something to be working toward.

These days, it doesn't seem I have any tangible goals. I work. I spend time with friends and loved ones. Sometimes I read a book or do some writing. But none of these tasks that make up my everyday life have much of an end.

Believe it or not, I miss that structure. I miss finishing a task and mentally crossing it off my list.

So not long ago, with my usual fix-it mindset, I decided to work some goals into my life. I needed to find something to work toward that would take commitment and that I could celebrate when it was finished.

The goal I settled on was to run a 5K. Now I'm not a runner by any means, but my legs do work, and I figure I should use them while I still can. Furthermore, committing to a 5K seemed like good motivation to work at my goal regularly, so as not to keel over the day of the race.

Drumroll Please

Written by Jes-c Brandt

With my new aim in mind, I took the obvious first step: I turned on my computer. Naturally, I had to find a suitable race to register for. I perused the Internet looking at 5K runs in the Dallas/Fort Worth area.

There were a number to choose from, but my work schedule is a bit strange, so that eliminated several right off the bat.

Sifting through the remaining options, there were a few that didn't seem like me. I crossed the Spartan Race and the Diva Dash off the list, and I searched for something a little more average.

Many races were fundraisers for various worthy causes, and that seemed like a good route to go. I would have been happy to contribute to any of the charities, but one in particular stood out.

The Dreams on Wings 5K was created by the Hemispherectomy Foundation, an organization for children with severe epilepsy who have had radical brain surgery to remove or disable half of the brain.

I happen to have a close friend who has epilepsy, and while her case is not so severe, I thought of this run as a fitting way to honor her. After letting my friend know about the race, she decided to join me, and we each set out to start training.

Step two was returning to my computer. Naturally, I had to find a suitable training plan. After all, who am I to figure out how to prepare to run a 5K when there are far more qualified individuals out there?

With a plan in hand, I started a six-week process that recently ended when I crossed the finish line. I'm proud to say I ran the whole darn thing, and the experience was really a blast.

The founders of the event shared the story of their daughter, who had the surgery five years ago. Other recipients of the procedure were there, completing the race in wheelchairs pushed

Drumroll Please

Written by Jes-c Brandt

by dedicated parents.

Hope and celebration colored the morning, and it was a joy to collectively support the Hemi Foundation and be a part of something bigger than myself.

Running that 5K simultaneously gave me the sought-after sensation of completing a goal and the thrill of trying something new. To top it all off, they gave me a medal for finishing first in my age group. Granted, there were only two of us, but who doesn't love getting a medal?

Back in school, other people were setting initiatives for me. There really was no choice but to live life, finishing one assignment after another. Now I realize I didn't have to give that up when I graduated. I can set goals for myself and celebrate their completion, too. What's next?

Holyoke Enterprise May 30, 2013