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Cover Runner Kiley Lyall Is Doing Even Greater Things!

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Photo: Kathleen Lyall/@healthy.autism.runners

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Remember **Kiley**? The spunky, smiley, super-fast 2015 cover runner winner who sprinted across the pages of our magazine and into our hearts with her inspiring story of overcoming epilepsy? It has been almost six months since Kiley was featured in our January/February issue and a lot has changed in her life. Back then, she was on the fast track to success—running half marathons in

her hometown of Chicago, competing in races to raise awareness for not only epilepsy but also for children with all kinds of special needs and even competing in the State Special Olympics. However, Kiley was also experiencing recurring, life-threatening seizures. When we were shooting her for our cover, Kiley was a candidate for brain surgery, something that could result in her being seizure-free forever.

Now, four in a half months post-surgery, [Kiley is back training](#), back racing and celebrating more than 140 days seizure-free. Though she still has a month and a half to go before she is cleared to run longer distances—her skull is still healing—Kiley was back on the treadmill four weeks after her surgery and back to strength training and running six weeks post-surgery. Kiley is a speeding bullet when it comes to running; it is her passion. This past July, Kiley raced at the [Rock 'n' Roll Chicago 5K](#). But what made this race so special? This time Kiley had no reason to fear the mid-summer heat.

“She has never been able to run in the heat before without seizures,” explained Kathleen Lyall, Kiley’s mother. “So for her to compete in July is a huge accomplishment.”

Kiley’s favorite part about the race, however, was not her newfound running abilities, but the people she encountered. “Her favorite part was everybody that recognized her along the race and either asked her for a hug or were cheering her on loudly along the way,” said Kathleen. “She still wasn’t feeling 100 percent that day, so every little cheer helped, along with the *WR* team following her along the way!”

Kiley’s speech skills have also skyrocketed since the brain surgery. “She is able to now hold a real adult conversation,” said Kathleen. “She had hidden for the past 24 years, due to the autism and seizures, a super sense of humor, and we are finally hearing, through improved language, all the goals and dreams she has been holding inside all these years.”

Kiley has hopes of going to the Special Olympics World Games and traveling much more than she has in the past. She even has plans to live in her own apartment close to home as an independent woman. Kiley still works at the local hair salon, but with her newly discovered skills, she has gone from washing towels, mirrors and doors to answering phones, greeting customers, washing clients’ hair and much more.

Kiley is currently training for the Rock ‘n’ Roll Las Vegas Half Marathon taking place in November. “We are doing a lot of cardio, weights and continued athletic training with Kris Kalmese at Kalmese Wellness Studio,” said Kathleen.

Kiley diet is also all organic, gluten-free and sugar-free. Though the most challenging part of the surgery has been re-training and re-building her strength and endurance, Kiley has discovered a new love of strength training and lifting weights. So much so, she aims to attain her personal training certificate so she can assist in training other differently abled athletes. “At this moment we have no post-surgery concerns,” said Kathleen. “It has definitely been a life-changing experience.”

Kiley and Kathleen also shared their goal of opening their own sensory gym, where people with special abilities could engage in activities with friends and family. Since the surgery, Kiley and Kathleen’s plan has become real; they plan to have their gym ready by October.

“We are currently writing grants and seeking possible corporate sponsors,” said Kathleen. “Once the facility is funded and up and running, we can’t even explain the abundance of interest in usage from differently abled families, as well as teachers, OTs, PTs, nutritionists and recreational therapists.”

You can follow the Kiley and her mother’s sensory gym progress on Facebook at [“Sensorying Fitness Sensory Gym.”](#)

