

Running the Globe in Gratitude for a Daughter's Recovery

BY KATHERINE GUSTAFSON | WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2010 11:30 AM ET

To support the drug addiction recovery program that saved her stepdaughter, Linda Quirk ran seven marathons and is now jogging across four deserts.

When Linda Quirk's stepdaughter Katherine found her way from addiction to good health with the help of the **Caron Foundation's** drug and alcohol addiction treatment and recovery program, Quirk needed a big way to show her gratitude and support.

So the then-55-year-old grandmother from Jacksonville, Fla., started to run. She ran and ran and ran, training with a coach, intent on taking on marathons to raise money for Caron. In a single year she finished seven marathons, one on each continent, and pulled in \$370,000.



"When I lost hope, [she] gave me hope. When I didn't have confidence, she gave it to me," Katherine told the **Florida Times-Union** on why she decided to nominate Linda for Teleflora's "America's Favorite Mom" contest.

While Quirk is by no means the oldest woman to run a marathon (that would be world record holder **Jenny Wood-Allen**, who was 90 when she ran the London Marathon), her success in conquering seven back-to-back might raise some eyebrows. But she's not done yet; she's got something even more ambitious up her sleeve for her next challenge. As her website **Run7on7.com** states, "The next mission: The 4 Deserts in 2010." She aims to raise \$1 million for Caron and raise awareness about addiction treatment and recovery.

Time magazine named the 4 Deserts second on its list of Top Ten Endurance Competitions in the world. This is a death-defying event involving a series of multi-day, 150-mile ultramarathons across — you guessed it — four deserts: the Atacama, Gobi, Sahara and Antarctica.

"My motivation is to give back," Quirk told the **Daily Spark**. "We were fortunate enough to be able to put our daughter through this (Caron) treatment center, which absolutely saved her life. This is just our family's way of giving back and giving those that can't afford it a second chance at life."