

## 2021 Relay Team Profile: Full Psych Adventure Team

Lots of 14-year-old high school students are engaged in cross country running this fall. Lorelei Lehman, a 9th grader at Pine Richland High School in the northern suburbs of Pittsburgh, PA, is not your average 14-year-old.

Lehman recently completed the Rachel Carson Trail Challenge, a 35-mile adventure on the rugged Rachel Carson Trail in Allegheny County, PA with over 8,000 feet of elevation gain. "Unlike a footrace, the 'challenge' is not to win, but to endure, to finish the hike in one day," according to the race website. Lehman ran/hiked the Challenge and finished with a time of 13:20:49, well under the 15-hour limit.



"It was really hard but definitely worth it," said Lehman. "I broke my arm on a BMX bike

in 2020, so my family started hiking the Rachel Carson Trail. I said that I wanted to do that trail in one day, so my parents supported me in doing the race. You just have to keep moving and you eventually get to the finish line. It's all mental."

Now she is bringing a 5-runner women's relay team to take on Central PA's Tussey Mountainback 50 Mile Relay and Ultramarathon on Oct. 31.

Lehman discovered the Tussey Mountainback race from a relay teammate who attended Penn State. "My running teammate, Chelsea, wanted to do her first 50 miler at Tussey Mountainback so I wanted to join her." Lehman originally thought to also take on the 50-mile ultramarathon but opted to form a relay team instead.

"All girls," said Lehman. "I'm the only kid though. They are all adults. I am the fastest one though."

The relay team, dubbed Full Psych Adventure Team, takes its name from an organization for which Lehman's mom is a coach. The Full Psych Adventure Team is "a group of athletes that believe in adventure for everyone in a safe and inclusive environment."

Lehman ran her first 5K at age 6 at a Girls on the Run event. "By that age, I had already seen my dad compete in Ironman triathlons, so I ran with him."

Lehman said running with her high school cross country team is going well. "This is my first high school season, and my times are slowly getting faster."

As a perk of being a dedicated runner on her school team, Lehman doesn't need to plan her training.

"I go to cross country practice every day after school and have meets throughout the week. My mom didn't let me do

any other training for Tussey because I was already doing so much."

Lehman's future adventure plans aren't confined to running.

"I love the State College area and I come in the summer to participate in BMX camp at Woodward Action Sports. I want to get a job there next summer as a junior counselor."

One of Lehman's teammates brings a different challenge to the relay event. Lulu Searles, a 46-year-old single mom, is deaf. She lost her hearing and balance nerves after a brain tumor removal 2.5 years ago. An avid runner, Searles continues to race in ultramarathons and obstacle course races.



As a deaf runner, Searles faces challenges that others around her may not realize.

"The biggest challenge I face both in training and racing is other athletes on the trail not realizing I am deaf and getting frustrated and angry with me if I don't get off the trail when they approach from behind."

On the trail, Searles has taken advance action to help address this.

"I have added Deaf Athlete to all of the gear on my back to alert others that I cannot hear them approaching me. I also have a service dog, Molly, who does all my training with me. She alerts me when other athletes are approaching as well as assists me when I lose balance and fall to get back up."

Participating in races provides additional challenges.

"People see that I am an athlete and always question why I have a service dog. The other difficult part is that a majority of the races I do either do not allow service dogs or the conditions of the race are not safe for Molly – heat, too many people, too long of a distance, or obstacles."

Searles represented the United States in the World Championship race in Vermont in September.

The Mountainback event welcomes both recreational and competitive runners to participate on relay teams of 2 to 8 runners, as well as offering the solo ultramarathon option.

Proceeds from this year's event will support CommonFood Centre County, a non-profit, all-volunteer group whose key mission is to resource underserved and under-employed elderly, single parent families, and low-income families in Centre County and neighboring areas with nutritious food and related services.

### Tussey Mountainback 50 Mile Relay and Ultramarathon