

The Monster Runner Award

The Monster Runner Award is designed to celebrate the runners in our community who excel in race finishes, overcome personal challenges, run personal bests, contribute to a better life for those around them, and go far beyond their comfort zone to find something special within.



July 2009 Monster Runner – Jenner Higgins

If you've been in the running community in Eugene for the past few years, you've probably lined up at a local roadrace and saw a kid who ultimately beat you to the finish line. Well, Jenner Higgins at 10 years of age, is indeed that fast. Recently, at the Aquafina Butte To Butte 10K, Jenner smashed the 10 & Under age group record by an astounding 4 minutes, covering the 6.2 mile course in 43:36 (7:01 per mile pace). In fact, Jenner finished in 154th place in the event, out of nearly 5,000 runners and walkers, while winning his age division by nearly 9 minutes over the next runner.

Jenner began running at 5 years of age, and he admits that he's not sure why, but within a few months, he was lining up with his dad to run his first 5K race. In his inaugural event, Jenner says he just wanted to have fun, and ran his dad's pace (which didn't seem too tough). After a few events, he found that he especially enjoyed the competition with anyone in the race, and from there he was hooked. Although his dad, Kelly, knew early on that Jenner liked to run when Jenner first visited the track, he had no idea where it might lead. After that, Jenner kept asking to run longer distances and his first 5K with dad set him in motion. While they both used to race each other around the yard, at about age 6, Jenner's pace in races was becoming progressively faster than his dad's, and dad adds that, "He just keeps pulling away." Running never seems to feel like work for Jenner – he says he likes to run longer distances so that he can enjoy it for a longer period of time, like in 2008, at age 8, when he ran the Eugene Half Marathon. Jenner's motto throughout: Have fun, do your best (which could include PRs) and maintain a positive attitude.

When Jenner was three, his family moved to Eugene for the lifestyle, without knowing much about the rich running tradition of the area. Appropriately, Jenner has many other talents besides running. He's also bilingual, speaking fluent Japanese, excels at soccer and basketball (playing with older kids), and plays the piano (Vivaldi and Beethoven are his favorites). As Jenner heads into 5th grade this fall, he says that he still really enjoys math, science, reading, and of course, physical activities. His favorite book of late is *Despereaux*, which he can gleefully recite the storyline from memory. While Jenner's storyline is still unfolding, one thing's for certain, he's going to be tough to beat at races, and having fun along the way. He has aspirations of being an elite athlete in the future, and is well on his way, without putting any pressure on himself, other than just trying to have fun. Be sure to give him a high-five at the start of the next race, and then watch him disappear to the finish line.