



POINTS
OF LIGHT

DAILY POINT OF LIGHT

THESE WOMEN RUN OBSTACLE COURSES TO HELP CHILDREN FACING HEALTH OBSTACLES

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At the YOLO Strong Foundation, participants don't simply walk or run to raise money for good causes. They climb over walls, dangle from ropes, carry other runners on their shoulders and surmount other challenging obstacles as they race. The money they raise goes to help young children with cancer attend school in a special setting that protects them from germs, and for other children with autism and other disabilities to receive tablets and other adaptive equipment. When Danielle Taylor, a busy mom and marketing businesswoman, wanted to do something to help others, she hardly chose an easy path to do it. But in just a few years, she's persuaded more than 200 other women to join her.

What inspires you to volunteer?

"It's simple. Because we're lucky. We all have healthy children. Our families have not had to deal with the death of one of our children. I feel like it's our obligation to give back to families who are not as lucky as we are. The only difference between us and them is luck. At any time, God forbid, this could be us or our families or our children and I just hope there would be families out there who would help us."



Tell me what you do with the [YOLO Strong Foundation](#).

“I started out with two friends, so there were just the three of us. I did research to find charities to help. I found out about the Morgan Center, (in Hicksville, N.Y.) which is the only preschool in the U.S. for children who are undergoing chemotherapy. Our support helps kids pay for tuition and is now helping the school with its plans to open up additional locations. We also help Danny’s Wish, where our donations have helped provide iPads to underprivileged children with autism to communicate with their loved ones. We also help Contractors for Kids, which assists families who are going through a difficult time due to the illness of a child; and Angela’s House, which provides help for medically fragile children.

How has YOLO Strong Foundation grown?

“We started with three of us six years ago. We did an obstacle course race and we set a goal of raising about \$500. We ended up raising over \$3,000. The next year we had 8 girls and we raised over \$9,000; the year after that, we had 18 and we raised 19,000. Last year, we had 72 and raised 107,000. This year, we just finished our second race and to date, we’ve raised \$65,000. We had 220 participants.”

What’s been the most rewarding part of your work?

“To look around and see all of these people who have come to help families that they don’t personally know. There’s so much ugliness and talk of what’s wrong with our society, but I think there is more good than bad. Our runners feel better off for doing the right thing. They almost immediately sign up for the next one. The second thing is that I never thought about the impact we’d have on our own children. We actually now have children who have asked to do a race, to compete also. We have children who are holding up signs and handing out water bottles. As a parent, we’re always telling our children to help out and make the right choices, but it’s a whole different thing when they see us doing it. When they see their moms out there, jumping over walls, jumping over fire, climbing up ropes, carrying sandbags, it really impacts them and they’re starting to want to be part of the movement also.”



How do you find women to participate?

“A lot of it is through social media. We’ve gone on local talk shows to raise awareness. We’ve been in the newspaper a couple of times. We’ve been on the radio. A past manager of the New York Yankees spoke about us at a press conference. We’ve been invited to be a part of Dr. Oz’s studio audience, so we’re hoping get up and speak with him on the show about what we’re trying to do here. It can be daunting to get people to compete in an obstacle course race, but we provide training sessions for them to help get them get up to speed and then we help each other get through it.”

What have you learned through your experiences as a volunteer?

“That nothing is off limits. We talk and come up with ideas and we say, ‘Can you imagine if we did this?’ We’ve actually accomplished the ‘what if!’ ”

Are there any new partnerships, programs, or events that you are excited about?

“Our dream was always to catch the attention of a company called Spartan. They predominantly help military families and veterans. I really wanted to have our team compete in a Spartan race and become one of their charity partners. They are probably one of the most well-respected obstacle race companies out there. I’m honored to say they contacted us and asked us to become the charity partner for their first Long Island race, which we just did a few weeks ago.”

Why do you think it’s important for others to give back?

“We’re all busy and we’re all ‘time poor.’ We all have our own families and we’re trying to the best for our families. But I strongly believe that we should put ourselves in these people’s positions and think about medical bills and what it means to potentially cut your income in half to have to be there to physically take care of your children or take them to treatment. If we can help impact these families, we’ve done a good job.”

Do you want to make a difference like Danielle? Visit [All for Good](#) for local volunteer opportunities.

Post written by Kay Nolan