

# 3 Tahoe half marathons help runner complete 52 in a year

By Jessie Marchesseau

Aurora De Lucia will be running the Tahoe Trifecta starting today. That is three different half marathons in three days.

What makes De Lucia different than the dozens of other people she will be running with this weekend? Oh, just that she is 22, had open heart surgery 2½ years ago, is on a quest to run 52 half marathons in 52 weeks and is raising money for the charity Broadway Impact in the process.



Aurora De Lucia will run three half marathons in Lake Tahoe on Sept. 28-30.

Photo/Provided

Bubbly, giggly, talkative and undeniably motivated, De Lucia originally came up with this challenge just to prove to herself that she could do it. She ran her first half marathon

in 2009 and calls it “pretty much one of the most amazing day of my life.”

That was before she got sick.

Until about three years ago, De Lucia had no idea she suffered from a congenital heart condition known as Wolff-Parkinson-White syndrome. Essentially, her heart had an extra electrical pathway, something that can lead to an excessively rapid heart rate.

Doctors said she was lucky they found it. Usually it’s something they find in an autopsy.

During the next six months the Los Angeles resident had four failed ablation procedures on her heart, complications caused by the procedures and finally, open heart surgery. Then in June 2010, the extra pathway was declared gone, and De Lucia was set free.

After a year of getting her life back together, she decided it was time to focus on her goal of running another half marathon or 13.1 miles. But it was no easy task. She could not go very far or very fast. On a whim, De Lucia signed up for a 5K as a way to encourage herself. Then she signed up for one the next weekend, and the next, and the next, progressing up to the 10K. That’s when she got the idea: she could do one race every week, 52 half marathons in 52 weeks.

“Fifty-two should be pretty sufficient to prove to me that I can do it,” she said of her plan.

So in January 2012, the challenge began. Along the way she has seen old friends, made new friends, travelled all over the U.S. and even ran a half-marathon with her father – the highlight of the year so far.

This weekend’s races will be numbers 31, 32 and 33; putting her well past the half way mark. Today is the Emerald Bay

Marathon (Emerald Bay to Lakeside Beach), Saturday is the Tahoe Nevada Half Marathon (Spooner Summit to Incline Village), and Sunday is the Lake Tahoe Half Marathon (Rubicon to Pope Beach).

"I'm a marathon runner myself, and I can't see how she's going to do it," John Bernard, a long-time friend of De Lucia's, said, "but I know she's going to do it."

Bernard will be joining her in the Columbus, Ohio, race next month, as will her father.

Part way through the year, De Lucia decided that running for herself was not enough, she wanted to do it for a cause. Choosing Broadway Impact, a national organization supporting marriage equality, was a no-brainer for her.

"I couldn't think of anything that was more important to me than human beings and treating human beings equally," she said.

Jenny Kanelos, executive director of Broadway Impact, said they are proud to have De Lucia representing their cause because she embodies everything they hope people will get out of their foundation.

"What she's doing is exactly what our organization was founded on: get inspired, and take action," Kanelos said.

She also added, "I think anyone who takes on 52 marathons in 52 weeks has got to be pretty incredible."

If you happen by one of the half marathons this weekend, look for De Lucia in her trademark red "Who's Bad" baseball cap, or follow her on her quest online.

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**Notes:** Expect traffic delays Sept. 28-30 during the Lake Tahoe Marathon events. This website has more details.

