

## Winners from the start

Coletta, Pohlsander set to take on Freihofer's Run after battling cancer

By [Pete Dougherty](#)

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Only a select handful of the 5,000 runners who toe the starting line Saturday at the Freihofer's Run for Women are in it to win it. Most are there just to run.

For some, their victories were achieved before the race.

Two local women have spent the past year undergoing treatment for breast cancer. After their radiation sessions concluded, each reached out to the Freihofer's Training Challenge as a way to continue their rehabilitation.

Their goal is to be among those to complete the 5-kilometer run in downtown Albany.

"First of all, it was for women. I liked that," said Dawn Coletta, a mother of three from Clifton Park who was diagnosed 14 months ago. "It's a race that these runners from all around the world run. These women are marathon runners, Olympic runners. I'm not going to be with them, but I'll be in the same race with them. It's pretty cool. All of those 5,000 women that are out there, it's just a nice thing to be a part of."

Coletta, 41, said the last time she did any regular running was in eighth grade.

It was a similar story for Lee Pohlsander, 51, of Rensselaer. She said she hadn't run since third grade. Her cancer was discovered in its early stages during a routine mammogram in January.

"The radiologist talked about the side-effect of fatigue coming with radiation therapy and suggested that I do more exercise than I have done, specifically cardio exercise," Pohlsander said. "Somebody else suggested that I join the Freihofer's training because it would be fun to train with a group instead of trying to do it by myself."

When you haven't run since childhood, the training can be a challenge, but these are women who conquered far more difficult obstacles than working out.

Coletta moved here from Long Island in February 2011. She learned of her cancer two weeks before her 40th birthday and had a lumpectomy last April. During that surgery, doctors discovered the cancer had spread to other areas of her breast, so the following month she had a double mastectomy with immediate reconstruction.

She endured four months of chemotherapy, followed by radiation treatments, which ended just before Christmas. Her prognosis is good.

"My husband, Raymond, has been a real rock through everything," she said, "taking care of me and the kids."

It was around her latest birthday that she decided to join the Training Challenge, running twice a week with other women, under the guidance of a coach, chiropractor and nutritionist.

"It's hard in its own way, but it's definitely easier than dealing with cancer," Coletta said. "You're surrounded by all of these wonderful women. You're out doing something healthy for yourself and feeling good about yourself."

Pohlsander, who grew up in Delmar and has spent most of her life in the Capital Region, considers herself lucky that she didn't have to go through chemo.

She said that without the goal of running in the Freihofer's, she probably wouldn't have the motivation to embrace the training.

"The goal is definitely important," Pohlsander said. "It's easy to skip it if you don't have some kind of goal. Goals are much more fun.

"My daughter ran in it about 10 years ago, so she's been an inspiration to me. I figure I'll be at the end of the pack, and that's OK."

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At a glance

FREIHOFER'S RUN FOR WOMEN

**When: 10 a.m. Saturday**

**Where: Albany**

**Event website: <http://freihofersrun.com/>**

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