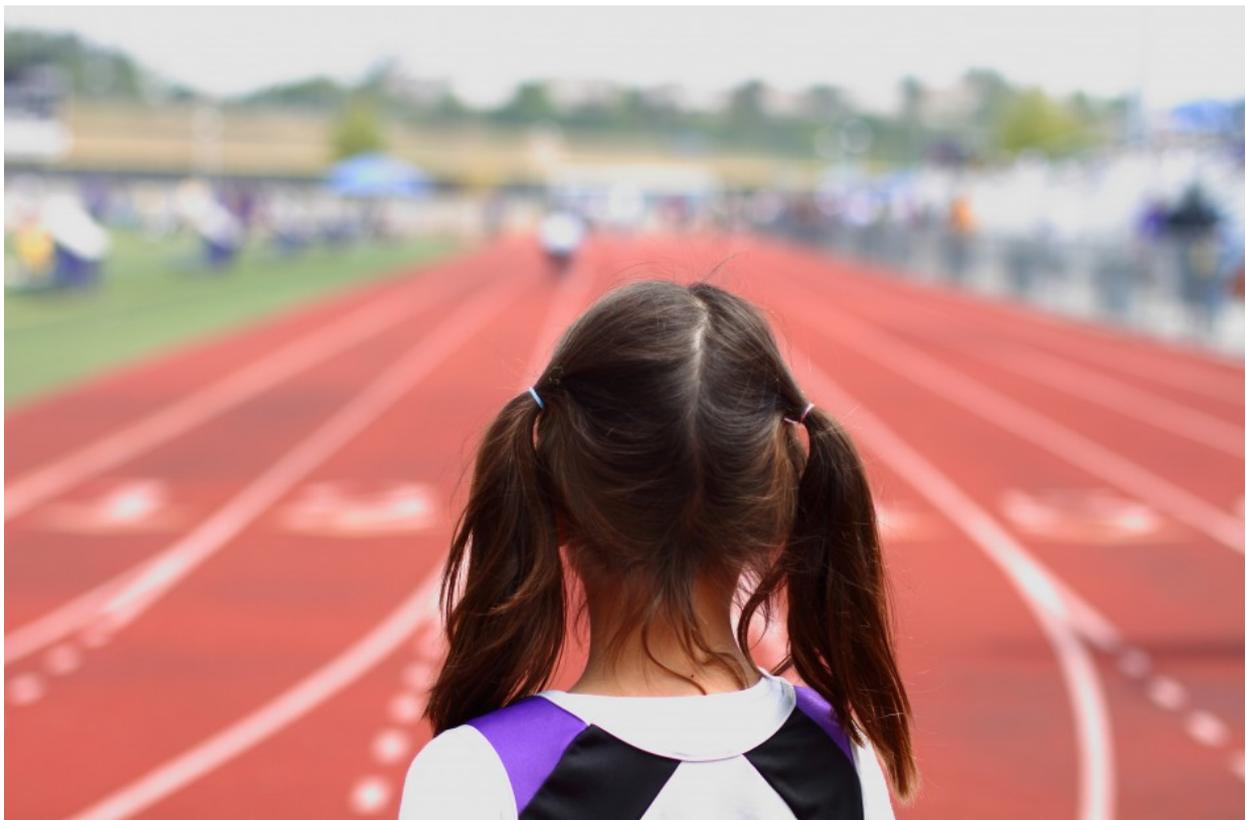




On the Right Track

📅 March 19, 2016 👤 CQ125 💬 No comments



Our stories connect and inspire. This is one story, a pivotal moment in a young girl's life. Imagine. Eight years old and beginning to discover wings. This is Natalie Pope's story.

Natalie remembers. The year was 1998. As her father drove the family's car, she sat in the backseat with Grandma. This was their special time. Grandma looked into Natalie's eyes and whispered, "Tell me something about school."

Resting her head upon Grandma's shoulder, Natalie said, "I joined the school's track team and I might get a chance to race at Town Centre Stadium. It's a little scary."

Grandma replied, "I remember a time when I was your age and I tried something new." Her eyes shone as she shared her own track story. At the end she sighed, "I even won four blue ribbons." Laughing, she patted her granddaughter's hand. "You must never be afraid to try something new and exciting, Natalie. It's an opportunity."

With Grandma's urging, Natalie decided to try out for the elementary school's track team. It was a titanic moment for such a shy, timid child. She qualified.

On the day of the competition, Natalie's mother handed her a packed lunch. Inside was a chocolate bar. "A treat. For after the race," Mom said.

The family headed to Town Centre Stadium and took their seats on the bleachers. They sent positive energy forth to the child that stood below. It was as if they had given Natalie a collective hug. Their love wrapped itself around the frightened young girl.

Seated on the grass below the bleachers, Natalie focused upon the ordeal ahead. Finally her school's name was announced. Bravely, she took a deep breath and walked to her place on the track.

The crowd clapped as the runners set up in their lanes. The announcer hollered, "On your marks. Get set. Go." In that moment, Natalie swallowed her fear and flew. She recalled the thunderous applause as she rounded the final bend.

Encouragement and bravery paid off. After the race, Natalie beamed as she was awarded her first, Fifth Place ribbon. Later her mother would say, "It looked as if you wanted to roll across the finish line but you did it."

In retrospect, Natalie commented, "For an eight year old, one lap around the Town Centre track seemed endless."

Natalie speaks fondly of the encouragement she received as an eight-year-old child. From a Grandma's wisdom and a family's devotion, Natalie became a confident adult. She is grateful for the opportunity she had to experience the City of Coquitlam's Town Centre Stadium. She credits that childhood event as one of many moments that gave her wings.

Some days, Natalie returns to Town Centre Stadium. Now an adult, she laces up her running shoes and recalls a time long ago. She jogs for the child she once was and the successful woman she has become. She runs to support a healthy lifestyle. As Natalie rounds the final bend, she imagines the audience cheering her on. The loudest applause comes from her Grandma.

- *Lynne Nielsen*

If you have a Coquitlam memory, please share your story, photos and artifacts with the Coquitlam 125 story gathering team at stories@coquitlam.ca, or you can [submit your stories](#) online. Help us to celebrate Coquitlam's 125th birthday!

Categories: [125 News](#), [Our Stories](#)

