

January 2018 - Elena Garcia-Ferrer

With a brother in the [Kilometer Kids](#) program and a mother who was an assistant for coach Lisa Kubes at Mountain View Elementary, Elena Garcia-Ferrer was dragged to a lot of Kilometer Kids practices. During those early years and in her first year in the program as a fourth grader, Elena absolutely hated going. She would sit on the playground waiting for practice to be over, and then, even in her first year, would always find a reason not to run.



So when Elena's mother Angela signed her up for this fall's program, coach Lisa Kubes wasn't expecting much.

"If you would've told me a year ago that Elena would have been a [classroom] ambassador and the one to run the most miles, I would have said you were crazy," Kubes says. "It was like pulling teeth when she was younger."

But that's exactly what happened, as Elena ran the most miles in her class, finishing with 56.7 miles run over the course of the fall season. Elena's victory shocked last year's winner, and her neighbor, Jack Hansen, who finished with 52.5 miles.

"I liked getting the extra exercise," says Elena. "I liked pushing myself and it just seemed fun. Jack is a lot faster than me, but I'm slower and can run a lot longer." Elena attributes her victory to her ability to push herself outside of school, as she racked up more than 15 miles over her fall break. Her newfound love of running even trickled up to her parents, who found a completely new angle to their relationship with their daughter.

"My husband and I started fighting over who got to run with her," says Angela. "The first time she got me out running I hadn't run for over a year. So when we were running up that first hill and she kept going and I wanted to stop, that really motivated me. There was no way I was going to stop if my daughter could keep going." As an assistant in the Kilometer Kids program, Angela has been able to witness the impact Kilometer Kids can have not just on her daughter, but on the entire group.

"There's a couple girls that I run with because they need a little extra motivation," she says. "They always ask me to run together and we set our targets about how far we're going to run, and it's just fun to build that endurance. When they first started they couldn't even run a single lap, and now they get asked to run a mile without stopping and they just take off and go run and don't even think twice about it."

As for Elena, she's now reaping the rewards of running in her other activities as a

swimmer, rock climber, and volleyball player, noting how running has made those sports much easier. And while Kilometer Kids takes its winter break, she's gearing up to get back out there in the spring to run more miles with her mom and dad and, of course, try to defend her mileage crown.

Have a child, volunteer, or coach that you think should be featured here next month? [Let us know!](#) Send an email to Kilometerkids@atlantatrackclub.org with a short description of your story and we'll get in touch to learn more.