

HIGH COUNTRY RUNNING

Motherhood and running: Happy Mother's Day to all the moms!

BY RACHEL SMITH AND FRIENDS

Special to the Daily Sun

It's Mother's Day weekend and — becoming a mom just over three years ago and now having a 3-year-old and 1-year-old — I think a lot about motherhood these days.

Life with an infant and toddler has had me in "mom-mode" most hours of most days (and nights). My daily runs have become my "me-time," and, while I'm still training to be an elite competitor, I joke my workouts are often my more zen periods of my week. In all seriousness, my life has never been more full or meaningful. Being a mom is THE best thing I'll ever get to be, and THE thing I want to pour my heart and energy into more than anything.

And while I'm far from a perfect mom (does that even exist?), I can say with certainty that running makes me a better mom — helping me show up for my girls feeling more centered, joyful and energized.

I'm lucky to have had some phenomenal moms (special shoutout to my own mom, sister, mother-in-law and close friends) be guiding lights and amazing support people as I stepped into motherhood. I asked a few of my local running-mom friends how running and motherhood have impacted the other in their own journeys and wanted to share some of their insights.

Stephanie Bruce, mom of three, explained: "Becoming a mother gave me such a greater sense



COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

Rachel Smith holds her youngest daughter minutes after she finished in second place in the BAA 5K during Boston Marathon weekend.

of purpose for my own running. Until I had kids, running was all about myself and finding out how good I could be. Then motherhood came along and showed me some important life lessons. There are so many things out of your control, but your effort and attitude are always in your control. How you show up each day as a parent is such a beautiful parallel to how you can show up for your own training and racing. There will be good days and bad days, but who you become along the way is really what it's all about."

Sara Hall, mom of four, shared: "When Ryan and I decided to adopt our kids, we weren't sure what we were getting ourselves into. But we felt like running had taught us to keep showing up — even when things are tough or when they're not clicking, we can keep showing up and keep doing hard things. The lessons I had learned from running helped give me the confidence to take the plunge into motherhood.

"In both running and motherhood, the way I do things has looked different than I imagined it would or that was modeled to me. I travel a lot more and live a busier life than my pro runner mentors, but it's what's kept me happy and enjoying the sport. As a mom, I listen to the same rap music as my kids and share their crop tops — which is a lot different from my experience of my mom. But I've come to believe I show up the best in my running and my parenting when I'm the most true version of myself."

Karen London, mom of two, says: "Running has been linked to motherhood for me at every stage, from the very beginning right up to today. When my sons were babies, my running was a case of, 'I have to take care of me so I can take care of you.' Our family of four has long shared a love of running, and we are now at a stage of life where it helps us be a part of their world. We regularly run races and relays together and love to watch them compete whether that's in the NCAA heptathlon and decathlon or running their first marathon."

Happy Mother's Day!

RACHEL SMITH IS A MOTHER TO TWO AMAZING DAUGHTERS AND FEELS VERY LUCKY TO LIVE AND TRAIN IN FLAGSTAFF. SHE RUNS PROFESSIONALLY FOR NIKE AND IS ALSO THE VOLUNTEER COORDINATING EDITOR FOR THIS COLUMN. SHE WOULD LOVE FOR YOU TO CONTRIBUTE TO HIGH COUNTRY RUNNING BY EMAILING HER YOUR RUNNING-RELATED STORIES TO RACHSCHNEID18@GMAIL.COM.



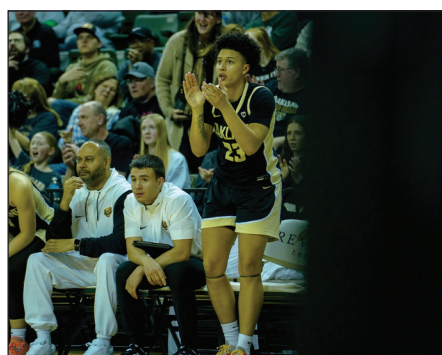
JOYCE MAKDISI, UMASS ATHLETICS

UMass forward Leah Bullard (7) shoots a free throw during a game against UMass Lowell at Mullins Center in Amherst, Massachusetts on Nov. 18, 2025.



JOYCE MAKDISI, UMASS ATHLETICS

UMass forward Leah Bullard (7) gets into a defensive position during a game against UMass Lowell at Mullins Center in Amherst, Massachusetts on Nov. 18, 2025.



OAKLAND UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS, COURTESY

Oakland forward Leah Bullard appeared in 23 games for the Golden Grizzlies as a freshman in 2024-25.



OAKLAND UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS, COURTESY

Oakland forward Leah Bullard (23) shoots over an IU Indianapolis defender during a game last season.



JOYCE MAKDISI, UMASS ATHLETICS

UMass forward Leah Bullard (7) stands in the paint during a game against UMass Lowell at Mullins Center in Amherst, Massachusetts on Nov. 18, 2025.

BULLARD

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college stop. The Minutewomen went 23-7 last season, including a 15-3 conference record, good for third in the Mid-American Conference. UMass lost in the first round of the MAC Tournament against No. 6 seed Toledo on March 11.

Bullard last saw the court with UMass on Feb. 26 at Western Michigan.

Before moving to the northeast, Bullard was recruited by Oakland out of Dr. Phillips High School in Orlando. She saw more playing time as a freshman with the Golden Grizzlies, appearing in 23 games and averaging 8.4 minutes per contest. Bullard shot over 56% from the floor and scored 2.1 points per game. She made her collegiate debut against Rochester Christian University, scoring two points in nine minutes. She doubled her scoring output against Michigan State the following game, while also adding four rebounds, an assist and a steal.

Bullard scored a career-high eight points twice near the end of the season against Wright State on Feb. 19, 2025, and against Northern Kentucky in Oakland's regular-season finale on March 1, 2025.

The Golden Grizzlies went 9-22

with a conference record of 6-14 in 2024-25, good for the No. 10 seed in the Horizon League Tournament. Oakland defeated No. 7 IU-Indianapolis in the first round before losing to top-seeded Green Bay in the quarterfinals.

Bullard will join a Lumberjacks front court that has continuity from last season, but still has big needs to fill. Forwards Layla Davis and Emma Dasovich are confirmed to be returning next season, as is guard Madison Watts, last year's second-leading scorer.

The Lumberjacks allowed the second-most points in the Big Sky Conference last season (74.0), just a tick fewer than Portland State (74.1). NAU also had the fewest blocked shots per game in the league (2.58) and allowed 40.5 rebounds per game, only ahead of Montana (40.9).

Bullard's father, Titus O'Neil, is a WWE wrestler and former arena football player. He signed with WWE in 2009 and made his television debut in 2010. Both of Bullard's brothers, TJ and Titus Bullard Jr., play football at Florida. TJ is on Florida's spring football roster after playing the past four years at Central Florida.

Their father won a national championship with Florida as a redshirt freshman in 1996.

TRUTH IN TAXATION HEARING

NOTICE OF TAX INCREASE

In compliance with Section §15-1461.01, Arizona Revised Statutes, Coconino County Community College District is notifying its property taxpayers of Coconino County Community College District's intention to raise its primary property taxes over last year's level. The Coconino County Community College District is proposing an increase in primary property taxes of \$325,507 or 2.0%.

For example, the proposed tax increase will cause Coconino County Community College District's primary property taxes on a \$100,000 home to increase from \$65.11 (total taxes that would be owed without the proposed tax increase) to \$66.41 (total proposed taxes including the tax increase).

This proposed increase is exclusive of increased primary property taxes received from new construction. The increase is also exclusive of any changes that may occur from property tax levies for voter approved bonded indebtedness or budget and tax overrides.

All interested citizens are invited to attend the public hearing on the tax increase that is scheduled to be held May 20, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. at Coconino Community College, 2800 S. Lone Tree Road, Flagstaff, Arizona.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING FISCAL YEAR 2026-2027

Notice is hereby given to the residents and taxpayers of the Coconino County Community College District will conduct a **Public Budget Hearing** for consideration of the proposed budget for the 2026-2027 Fiscal Year on May 20, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. at Coconino Community College, 2800 S. Lonetree Road, Flagstaff, Arizona.

A **Special Board Meeting** for the purpose of adopting the District's 2026-2027 budget shall be held immediately following the Budget Hearing at the same location.

Budget data conforms to mandates of law specified in Arizona Revised Statutes §15-1461 concerning the advertisement and publication of budget information. The budget is posted for public review on the college's website, <https://www.coconino.edu/budgetinformation>.