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# Tibbetts case causes unrest for runners

BY **LACY GARRISON**  
*Reporter for the Southern Standard*  
*(McMinnville, Tennessee)*

Why do women run? Many local runners say it can be a solitary sport that's both meditative and exhilarating.

However, if you're a female runner, jogger or brisk walker, the recent Mollie Tibbetts case is unsettling and horrifying.

Last Tuesday, a first-degree murder charge was filed against a young man in the case of Tibbetts, a missing Iowa jogger, who disappeared the evening of July 18 while jogging in the rural farming town of Brooklyn, a close-knit community of about 1,500 residents.



**Paige Northcutt says to be aware of your surroundings when running.**

Sadly, this type of crime can happen anywhere, at any time. Take McMinnville resident Sarah Hoover's experience, for example.

"Last summer, I was running and could see a truck approaching me," said Sarah. "It was starting to drift over the lane toward me. The passenger swung the passenger door open like they were going to hit me and they barely missed and kept on going. I was pretty freaked out."

Another incident involved longtime runner Anne Myers, who was running by B&P Lamp Supply when an irate driver swerved toward her and two female running buddies.

"I gestured for the driver to slow down as he came very close to us and forced us into the ditch," recalls Myers. "Quickly, he turned his car around and raced back toward us and told us we had no right to be running on the road as we were. We had been running on the side of the road and couldn't understand what he was talking about."

After a verbal exchange, Myers took pictures of the license plate with her cell-phone and filed a complaint with the police department.

As women, what can we do? Do we hole up and run and walk only on a treadmill at home or in a gym? According to WCMS cross-country and track coach Patty Kelly, there are many safety precautions for young people and women alike.

"I tell my students to always run with a partner and not to run at night," said Kelly. "I also suggest emergency tags that clip to the shoe lace so if anything happens, people know who you are. That happened to my cousin who went into full cardiac arrest while she was out on a run and it saved her life."

USA Gym owner Paige Northcutt strongly believes in taking safety precautions, especially since many members of her gym are avid runners. At one point, she even bought mace for them to carry before they'd begin their routes from the gym.

"I'm a huge advocate for always being aware of your surroundings and I always look into the driver's eyes because sometimes they are not even looking at me or they're looking at their phones," said Northcutt when she's out for a run.

After talking to many local female runners, here's a recap of ways they've adapted in the interest of safety.

- Run with a partner or even a pet.
- Carry pepper spray and your phone, if possible.
- Be aware of your surroundings and be cautious of using earbuds.
- Change up your route.
- Use a shoe ID tag or bracelet.
- Wear reflective gear when running at night.

It's easy to feel safe in a small town like McMinnville. Don't get caught off guard.

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