

## Get out of closet and into your sneakers

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The early morning and the autumn weather are perfect for beginning a running program. The Closet Runners Anonymous World League, known as CRAWL, and the Women's Entourage of the Closet Runners Anonymous World League, dubbed WECRAWL, seized upon the opportunity of the increasingly darker mornings and shorter days to introduce their beginning running program at their joint meeting on the autumnal equinox on Sept. 22.

C R A W L / WECRAWL runners are lean, fast men and svelte, swift women who lack the courage to come out of their closets and display their speed and prowess publicly on the local roads and in the local races. They meet monthly at the Chapel of Perpetual Fitness between Surfside village and San Luis Pass.

The meetings begin with their Serenity Prayer: "Grant me the serenity to run secretly as well as I can, the courage some day to come out of the closet to display my running prowess and the wisdom to know when the time is right."

The autumnal equinox is occasion for special celebration because the CRAWL/WECRAWL members have more time to run in the shorter days and longer nights up to the winter

solstice. The equinox meeting also is the occasion for the annual Gear and Equipment for Running in the Dark exposition. The exposition features reflector vests, battery-powered flashing red lights that attach to a runners shorts and other gear for early morning and nighttime running.

Bill Q., the joint chair of the Brazoria County chapters of CRAWL/WECRAWL stepped to the driftwood podium in the Chapel of Perpetual Fitness and greeted the overflow, standing-room-only crowd with, "Hi, I'm Bill, and I'm a closet runner."

The weathered, gray chapel walls reverberated, "Hi, Bill."

Bill introduced a group of 23 guests who stood behind him. The guests were recruits for the CRAWL/WECRAWL beginning program for runners, Unfit Persons Who Are Newly Dedicated, called UPWARD.

CRAWL/WECRAWL members recruited the initial UPWARD group members from friends, peers and colleagues whose lives seemed ones of "quiet desperation." The recruits' lives are joyless and filled with "busyness" and chaos. They are victims of depression and world-weariness. In short, they need a running program to lead them to a richer life.

The UPWARD program will pair dedicated and enthusiastic CRAWL/WECRAWL members as mentors for the recruits. The mentors will run with the recruits, help them with their diet and weight-loss programs and develop a sensible beginning train program that will

eventually lead them to running independence and physical fitness and eligibility for full membership in CRAWL/WECRAWL.

The UPWARD group members were introduced by their first names and welcomed by cheers, whistles and hoorahs.

Then Bill Q. introduced me as a special guest of the autumnal equinox meeting.

"Hi, I'm Bill S. I used to be a closet runner, but I came out of my closet even though I am a mediocre runner. My life is better because of my bravery."

"Hi, Bill," the grey chapel walls again reverberated.

"What you have done tonight and what you plan for these recruits is a bold step," I said. "You know what running has done for your lives and your self-esteem. Running brought joy to your joyless lives and made you aware of the unique world all around you. I salute you and renew my own vow to bring the unfit to running and to put them on the road to life-time physical fitness. Together we can all make a difference and beat back the rising tide of obesity, especially in the young."

I receive a standing ovation with cheers of "Bill! Bill! Bill!..."

Information about CRAWL/WECRAWL and the UPWARD program is available at [www.billshawsite.net/CRAWL.htm](http://www.billshawsite.net/CRAWL.htm).

Run, renew your life and enjoy the Gulf Coast autumn.

**Bill Shaw's running column appears every other Monday in *The Facts*.**