

# Parents can help kids get fit, have fun

By Bill Shaw

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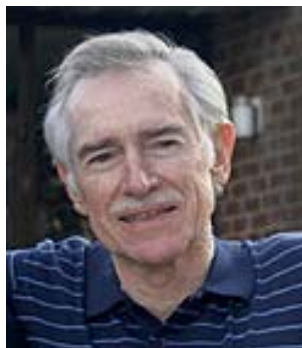
The Monster Dash 5K on Oct. 27 marked not only the end of the 2007 running season but also the end of the 2007 BASF-sponsored Kids Runs staged at almost all of the area contests. For a \$1 contribution, youngsters 12 and younger ran distances, depending on their ages and abilities, from 200 yards to a little more than a half mile.

BASF provided all participants T-shirts and finishers medals. Thanks to BASF, to Jennifer Carey who supervised the Kids Runs and to the physical fitness advocacy of Sharon Rogers, BASF manager of community and government affairs, for promoting youth fitness through this activity for more than 10 years. Kelly Colosimo of the Brazosport Area Road Runners Association coordinated the Kids Run.

“Back in the 1960s when P.E. was part of every day and fast food wasn’t, only 3 percent of 6- to 19-year-olds were overweight or obese,” Cynthia Bowers reported on the CBS Evening News on Nov. 8. “Today 30 percent are. And 80 percent of chubby adolescents will grow up to be overweight adults.”

Bowers noted projections

indicate 48 percent of Texans will be overweight by 2025, which led the Texas Legislature to mandate that beginning in the spring of 2008, Texas will become the first state in the nation to require at least 30 minutes of physical education a day. The legislation also requires that the 4 million Texas students in grades three through 12 take a series of annual



physical fitness tests in 2008 and compare their fitness to their peers in later years. When I was a youngster growing up in the '40s and '50s, I did not have the distractions that youngsters have today.

My family did not have a TV until 1956, my senior year in high school, and we had only two channels.

Physical education classes were required of everyone. In the daylight hours, we were usually on a vacant lot playing baseball or football or in a gym, a recreation center or the downtown YMCA.

It was difficult for our parents to get us in after dark because we loved to play outside.

It seems to me a sad state of affairs when our government and the schools assume what is a parental responsibility. Some parents have relinquished their responsibility of seeing to their youngsters' health and fitness, many perhaps by setting poor examples and expecting the schools to mentor their youngsters in health, nutrition and fitness.

What are responsible

parents to do to stem the tide of overweight youngsters and the problems of obesity?

Elizabeth Quinn suggests the following in “How Parents Can Get Kids Involved in Fitness,” in *Sports Medicine*.

First, make fitness a family matter.

“A research study showed that in families where both parents were active, 95 percent of the children were active,” Quinn said.

Second, get your youngsters involved in the physical activities you participate in and like, whether it's running, swimming, soccer, baseball or other physical activities. Help your youngster find a lifelong physical activity.

Third, make physical fitness fun, suggests Quinn. Do not make negative comments about your youngster's performance or ability. I accept my average abilities and my limitations. Youngsters have that right, too.

Last, says Quinn, take an active part in encouraging your child's school to schedule fun, age-appropriate physical activity and to make certain that physical activities are supervised and taught by qualified and knowledgeable instructors.

Encouraging physical fitness in the younger generation should begin at the family level, and those of us who know the value of physical fitness and fear the consequences for those who do not, should be proactive in promoting a fit and healthy lifestyle.

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