



Family Affair

Exercising regularly with your kids
has benefits beyond fitness

BY MARIA BLACKBURN

Parents are accustomed to their children nagging them for a new toy, or type of breakfast cereal, or a later bedtime. But an exercise program? Now that's unheard of.

At least that's what Ashley Deadwyler thought, until about a year ago when her two sons Avery, 10, and Julian, 8, began nagging her to take them running. The Houston teacher had just completed her first 10K and her sons were so inspired by the excitement and crowd at the finish line that they pleaded with her to train them for a race.

So after consulting with her father, who had helped her with her own train-

ing, Deadwyler, 36, filled some water bottles and took her boys to a nearby residential development that had flat roads and no traffic. They started out slow and ran together, sharing stories and offering words of encouragement along the way. Every night after dinner, the Deadwylers went out and ran for an hour. Today, as a result of their training, the boys are running six miles a night alongside their mom.

The rewards haven't just been in terms of mileage, says Deadwyler, whose family's story is featured in *Be Well*, a collection of stories and advice from a dozen U.S. mothers who have

reduced childhood obesity risk in their families through diet and exercise.

"Not only are the boys more active, but they are sleeping better at night and their grades and behavior at school have improved," she says. "Nobody watches TV anymore." And when the boys miss a night of running due to soccer practice, they can't wait to get out the next night and spend time together as a family. Deadwyler is convinced that other families could benefit from exercising together. "Once any mom started doing this with her child she would see such a difference in her family and feel better, too."

Childhood obesity rates are rising, daily physical education at school is falling victim to budget cuts and many children and adults struggle with getting their recommended daily exercise.

(That's 60 minutes daily for children and teens, 30 minutes five times per week for adults.) Most U.S. students exercise twice a week or more, but they still rank near the bottom among all countries for frequency of exercise, according to a recent federal government report, "U.S. Teens in Our World."

"When we were growing up we had phys ed every day in school and parents didn't need to worry so much about getting in the recommended daily allotment of exercise," says Jan Schroeder, an associate professor of kinesiology at California State University, Long Beach, who is affiliated with the American College of Sports Medicine. "Now, we as families have to make sure that our children are being provided with enough opportunities to move."

Getting out and exercising as a family doesn't require any special equipment or a huge time commitment, says Shawn Dolan, a sports dietitian and triathlete in California. And the bene-

fits of establishing a dedication to fitness early on can last a lifetime.

"Getting the whole family involved in being active together shows everyone that activities can revolve around movement rather than going out to eat or going shopping," Dolan says.

Here are some tips from experts on how to get moving together as a family: Let the kids decide on the activity. "When children choose, they have a vested interest," Schroeder says. "They don't want to think of this as a chore. This is playtime. This is an adventure." Ask your children what they would like to do, or give them some choices (like walking to the playground or playing tag in the yard) and let them decide.

Break a goal into manageable mini-goals and ask the kids to keep track, suggests Kay Morris, founder and director of Marathon Kids, a free school and community-based fitness program for elementary students and their families that currently has 180,000 participants

who walk and run 26.2 miles (the length of a marathon) over six months. Students keep track of their miles and their fruit and vegetable intake by coloring in a chart as they go. "Little kids are really visual and they love seeing their endurance increase visually," Morris explains.

Make getting to a destination part of the activity. "It might be as simple as walking your kids to school or riding your bikes to the store," Dolan says.

If you have a teenager, have them invite a buddy along on your exercise outings. "A friend provides a much-needed social connection since it's uncool to be with parents at that age," Schroeder says.

Take your talk for a walk. Exercising together allows kids to relax and talk about their day. "I used to get one-word answers from my kids when I asked them about school," Deadwyler says. "Now that we walk and run together, it's great because they share the whole story of their day with me." ■

U/L Certified Diesel and Gasoline Nozzles



The Right Connection™

Dixon now offers three U/L certified diesel and gasoline nozzles designed for use in a variety of applications from truck stops and terminal operations to large farm and consumer pumps.

- FuelMaster™ Diesel Nozzle
- Big Mouth™ Diesel Nozzle
- Farm / Consumer Nozzle

For more information, call 877-963-4966 or visit www.dixonvalve.com. For the right fuel connection, it's got to be Dixon.

Dixon

800 High Street, Chestertown, MD 21620
877-963-4966 • 410-778-2000 • Fax: 800-283-4966 • 410-778-4702

www.dixonvalve.com