

RUNNING CLUBS HELP STUDENTS WITH FOCUS, FITNESS

Elementary schools in district get funds from foundation

BY DEBORAH SULLIVAN BRENNAN

OCEANSIDE

Each morning at San Luis Rey Elementary School in Oceanside, students race around the field to boost their fitness and focus.

Principal Dominic Comacho started the running club in September, in an effort to get kids moving and offer an outlet for their morning energy. Comacho — who has previously worked as a classroom teacher, physical education teacher and sports coach — said he has seen how exercise boosts physical well-being and classroom performance.

"I know the importance of getting them calm, and getting them ready to learn," Comacho said.

San Luis Rey is one of six campuses in the Oceanside Unified School District that promote running as a school activity. Laurel, Libby, South Oceanside, Fousat and Mission elementary schools also have running clubs or programs.

They receive support

from the Carlsbad-based Move Your Feet Before You Eat Foundation, founded by event planner Kathy Kinane to improve health and fitness among kids. Kinane, who runs the Oceanside Turkey Trot, said the foundation donates between \$10,000 and \$14,000 annually to schools in Oceanside to help them to start running programs.

Students say it's a fun way to connect with friends, and helps them get off to the right start.

"I think the running club is mostly about getting your wiggles out in the morning before school," said San Luis Rey fourth-grader Kylie Gerard, 8. "Running, it gets your body started in the morning. I think that running is a good exercise for you. And I'm good at it, so I really love it. In class I feel pumped."

Fifth-grader Kiera Zimmerman, 11, agreed that running gives her a lift.

"When I run, I'm not tired," she said. "But when I don't run, I feel tired."

Students get 100 minutes of physical education each week, Comacho said, but that's not enough. He formed the running club after noticing how students seemed restless in the mornings before school.



DON BOOMER

Adrian Martinez (center) and other students run laps before classes begin at San Luis Rey Elementary in Oceanside on Thursday.

"What they used to do is play, and get in fights and arguments" over sports equipment and other issues before the bell rang.

He decided to channel their energy more productively with structured morning activity. Kids who don't run can participate in a reading club before school instead. But about 90 per-

cent of the kids do run, he said. That's partly due to the allure of colorful plastic "feet" charms they earn for running 20 laps. The Oceanside Turkey Trot chipped in bronze-colored turkey charms as well.

"We introduced the charms and the kids went bananas," Comacho said. Omar Salazar said he en-

joys the morning run, and has racked up 14 feet charms and three of the turkeys.

"It's fun because you can run with your friends," he said.

Kids track their laps using swipe cards that volunteers scan with software called Lap Tracker, which lets the school not only record their activity, but also

analyze it by student, grade or classroom.

Parents have gotten in on the action as well, joining their kids on morning runs on occasion, especially when the charms are awarded.

Public figures have gotten involved too, Comacho said. State Assemblyman Rocky Chavez came to run with the kids, as did Anne Garrett, an 83-year-old half-marathon runner from Oceanside who holds the record as the fastest woman in her age class. Comacho himself donned a turkey costume during a special Turkey Trot run, figuring that if it motivated the kids, it was worth the fowl play.

The running program dovetails with after school sports programs through the Boys & Girls Club, he said, since kids in sports want to get in shape for soccer or basketball. And teachers report that kids are less antsy and more focused, he said.

"I want to instill in these kids that they have to take care of their mind, body and soul, and have balance," Comacho said. "If they're not healthy, then they can't do the things they want to do."

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CYBER • Project leader says U.S. mustn't deviate from 'clear strategy'

FROM B1

tech giant Qualcomm; and Tai Ming Cheung, director of the University of California Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation.

In the wake of allegations that Russia used hacking to influence November's presidential election — possibly to help Republican Donald Trump defeat Democrat Hillary Clinton — the experts fretted that not enough was being done to secure the United States' vital communications and electrical infrastructure.

"The nature of the threats and the technology are evolving so quickly that we're still overwhelmingly focused on the technological side, of trying to get the owners and operators of infrastructure to do the basic things that they need to do," said Gregory Michaelidis, a close aide to former Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano and senior public affairs director in the agency's National Protection and Programs Director-

ate during the Obama administration.

"But we're going to need to start getting ordinary people involved," he said. "We can't just expect the public to wait in the wings for security to get to them. We started to see that at the end of the Obama administration, of attempts at nudging them ... to change behaviors to help cybersecurity."

Michaelidis and about 60 others converged at the home of former San Diego Port Commissioner Laurie Black and her partner Stephen Skinner, chief information officer for First Team Real Estate. The event was organized by the Washington, D.C.-based Truman National Security Project.

Although the session was conducted under "Chatham House Rules" — the attendees agreed to remain mum about what was said during the meeting — participants talked on the record to The San Diego Union-Tribune before and after the event.

"I think that the view we have as an organization is that there's a clear strategy for the United States to pursue in the world that's worked, and when we've deviated from that strategy, we and others have suffered," said Michael Breen, the Truman project's leader and a former Army artillery officer who fought in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Truman's think tank and leadership academy were created in the aftermath of the 9/11 terror attacks to provide guidance to a new generation of American policymakers. While the nonprofit is often linked to left-leaning causes, its leaders insist that their national security perspectives are in the mainstream of national political thought.

The group chose Harry Truman as its namesake because the combat veteran helped to establish the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and other global institutions after World War II to contain a rising Soviet

Union.

"We have a belief that the health and strength of international institutions are part of our security. We benefit from this architecture," Breen said. "Economic institutions, political institutions, security institutions — those undergird our prosperity and strength in the world."

Now the project has more than 1,500 members, including many who graduated from the think tank's training program. Thursday's gathering, called the Truman San Diego Salon, highlighted the group's increasing prominence in the San Diego region, one of the globe's largest concentrations of military might.

"San Diego is actually one of our newest chapters. It was literally two years today that we launched it," said Shawn VanDiver, a former enlisted sailor who served aboard the guided-missile cruiser Chancellorsville and the frigate Thach and who now directs Truman's San Diego chapter.

Upcoming Truman events in the local area include an April 18 gathering about energy and water security and a Memorial Day Sunrise Rose Ceremony to decorate the graves of those buried at Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery in Point Loma.

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LA MESA CHAMBER EVENT HONORS SIX FOR SERVICE

BY KAREN PEARLMAN

LA MESA

The La Mesa Chamber of Commerce will honor four people from the public safety sector and two volunteers at its ninth annual "Salute to Local Heroes" later this month.

The event "celebrates the strength of the community and honors six local heroes who serve, protect and make sacrifices for our La Mesa community," said Chamber President and CEO Mary England.

"Salute to Local Heroes" will be held from 5 to 8:30 p.m. Feb. 22 at the Town & Country Resort Hotel, 500 Hotel Circle North.

This year's heroes are:

- American Medical Response paramedic Elizabeth Robinson
- Heartland Fire & Rescue Capt. William "Billy" Doig
- La Mesa Police Department detectives Tim Cook and Jacob "Colt" Wisler
- La Mesa Police Department Retired Senior Volunteer Patrolmen Mike Sparks and Bill Walton

Robinson has been employed with AMR San Diego since 2013 and has been a paramedic with the company for eight months, serving the San Miguel Fire District areas, Lemon Grove and La

Mesa.

Doig has been a member of the La Mesa Fire Department (part of Heartland fire) since 2004 and was promoted to captain in January 2016. He also helps to raise public awareness for the Burn Institute.

Cook, who was assigned to the Regional Auto Theft Taskforce in August 2015, started Operation Kwik Boost to combat auto theft in East County. He was the department's 2016 Officer of the Year.

Wisler is currently assigned to the East County Regional Gang Task Force and has been the lead detective since 2014.

Sparks joined the Retired Senior Volunteer Patrol in January 2015 and has volunteered 1,000 hours to the community and the program.

Walton, no relation to the Helix High alum and basketball star of the same name, joined the Retired Senior Volunteer Patrol in 2016 and volunteers three to four times a week.

The event is open to the public and is \$75 per ticket, including complimentary parking. Tickets are available at lamesachamber.com or by calling (619) 465-7700.

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DIANE BELL

FROM B1

organizers call it a "brief" run, they aren't kidding. Racers will be running a mile or so wearing nothing but their underwear here today.

At least that's the theme of the Cupid Charities Undie Run at Liberty Station this pre-Valentine's Day weekend. With races in 37 U.S. cities and 10 abroad, it's billed as the world's largest underwear run (so, apparently, it isn't the *only* one).

While we're not Alaska, or Minnesota, or Maine, the

event couldn't have been on a much colder day — with a forecast high of 63 degrees, low of 49 degrees and a chance of showers.

People are disrobing for a good cause, though — to raise funds (\$3.7 million last year) for the Children's Tumor Foundation to fight neurofibromatosis, an incurable genetic disorder that causes tumor growth throughout the body often leading to chronic pain, sometimes so severe that sufferers can't wear clothing. Hence, the underwear theme.

Organizers, hopeful no one gets cold feet, have the

perfect post-race gift for top fundraisers: bathrobes.

Grace notes: Does Deborah Szekely ever slow down? At age 94, the fabled founder of health spas Rancho La Puerta and Golden Door, former head of the Inter-American Foundation in Washington, D.C., Mrs. San Diego 2002 and creator of the New Americans Museum at Liberty Station is holding a museum benefit.

U.S. immigrants' stories and contributions are highlighted at the museum. So, in a show of diversity for her Feb. 24 soiree at The Abbey, Szekely has assembled five classical musicians from around the world: Canadian clarinetist Julian Milks, Russian pianist Polina Osetinskaya and cellist Alexander Rudin, Swiss pianist Konstantin Lifschitz and U.S. violinist Mikhail Kopelman.

She is calling it "Grace Notes & Understanding," in contrast to the lack of understanding demonstrated 2½ months ago when museum hallway posters were defaced in what was logged as a hate crime.

"Too much immigration! Go back to your country. This one is ours!" was scrawled across one poster promoting a Mexican immigration art exhibit. On another was written, "Over population & crowding by immigration!"

Museum head **Linda Sotela** said she was "deeply troubled and saddened by this incident" and called it a direct assault on the museum's mission of celebrating immigrant contributions. As of this week, the culprits hadn't been apprehended.

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