

## Kids Just Wanna Reagan Run

The largest number of participants for the Reagan Run 5k falls in the age 18 and under category. To encourage our kids to get active through exercise and join in community activities, KSB Community Wellness and the Dixon Family YMCA bring *Kids Just Wanna Reagan Run* to the list of annual trainings offered to prepare for race day.

Kids age first thru sixth grade started their training in mid-May to prepare for the big day. Many of the participants are in the beginning stages of their running careers and the majority of the class have never run the entire Reagan Run 5k – or any 5k for that matter. Of course they participated in the Kid's Fun Run portion, although they are ready for the next challenge.

KSB Community Wellness, along with the help of parents and volunteers, established a set of plans and activities to teach participants how to safely stretch, running techniques, race day etiquette, nutritional importance, character values, and a variety of other components that lead to a successful race. Each of these items help in teaching the kids the importance of the components not only in running, in their everyday life as well.

The kids and volunteers start each class, meeting twice a week, with a round of static stretches. These stretches are quick moving intended to warm up their muscles while getting their heart pumping at the same time. With a few small sprints in-between each stretch, they get their bodies ready and some starting mileage. Once their heart is pumping and their muscles are warm, we head outside – weather permitting of course.

Parents and volunteers from a variety of groups including KSB Community Wellness, Dixon Family YMCA, Dixon Main Street, the Lee County Health Department, Yeti Trail and Ultrarunners, and the Rock River Road Runners, work on interval training to prepare for a continuous run on race day. The Reagan Run 5k is known for being a difficult route, full of hills, pavement, woodchips, and fun. All participants need to practice and train to get ready to tackle the difficult course. In the *Kids Just Wanna Reagan Run* practice runs, the kids and volunteers get anywhere from two to three miles each class, depending on their skill level. All skill levels are welcome to help encourage the kids that crossing the finish line is the most important piece.

Class of course is full of hard-work and determination, as each participant sets out on a new Reagan Run 5k adventure. We still have to have fun. Each class the kids learn about character traits including self-discipline, teamwork, pace, and sportsmanship. They also get healthy snacks to end their run such as apples, bananas, oranges, and water. Once all that is done, they get to play. Nothing ends a great run like quality time with your friends playing games. The kids are encouraged to be silly as a reward for their hard work during games of 'get the bacon' or 'sharks and minnows'.

At the end of the day, the kids leave with some recorded miles, an increased confidence in their abilities to run, some fun, red faces, and sweaty clothes. All in a good day of hard-work to prepare for the Reagan Run 5k.