

A club not really about running: Run Club

Today's column consists mostly of the voices of a wide range of locals, from middle school kids to retirees, including all decades in between.

The one thing they all have in common is they were out on the Baldrige Park walking/biking path during the Run Club event Tuesday, and they each agreed to tell me why they were there.

As they have for the past 20 Tuesdays at 6 p.m., a changing population of up to 30 walkers, joggers and runners gathered in downtown Montrose for a friendly 3-mile outing.

Approximately 10 people are returning participants — the rest are a mix of parents, kids, young singles, social walkers and many others who fit no stereotype or category.

They show up for the Run Club, which is a club that has no dues and requires no duties from participants, unless it may be the simple but

important precept of being friendly and treating each other as equals. The next four Tuesdays will finish off the season for this year's Run Club outings, and each is open to anyone who cares to come along.

Here is how the surveyed participants responded to my simple question: "Why did you choose to make time on a Tuesday evening to be here for this event?"

The faster runners on Tuesday included Laura Matacia, who said: "I started coming to Run Club to get to know people, since I just moved here recently from Ohio."

She moved here to take a job in engineering, using her newly acquired college degree. "I enjoy having other people to run with," she said, "and it helps me to find out about new running routes, too."

Also among this loose cluster of runners, most of whom did not already know each other, was John Paul, who said

that primarily he has been coming to the event because: "I find that it is a lot of fun to run with other people. That's the main reason. In addition to that, the running is keeping me fit, and I also like the feeling of the endorphins you get from distance running."

He is referring, of course, to the well-researched phenomenon of steady aerobic exercise encouraging the production and release of biochemicals made in the body's brainstem and spinal cord.

These naturally occurring components have been demonstrated to elevate mood and promote a sense of well-being, free of the major side effects that may occur with pharmacological interventions from outside of the body.

Connie Barr and Lori Lambeth were jogging and running side by side when I spoke to them, and they both agreed that the easygoing social element of the Run Club is the major draw for them to be there. The added fitness that goes with it is a close second place.

Troy Thompson was walk-

ing to accompany his son, Bryson, who was clearly enjoying being on his bike among the group of runners, joggers and walkers.

"I'm here to be with Bryson, because his grandmother has been bringing him here, though she couldn't make it today. This is Bryson's third time here, and he has been interested in returning ever since he first came with his grandmother on her fifth outing here, which got her a club T-shirt. Now that's his motivation and what he's working towards. Plus, I just enjoy being out here with him."

While we all were strung along the walking path in the woods in Baldrige Park, I recognized Don Horn, who was out there running independently. So I posed the same question to him.

"I run to stay in shape, five days a week when the weather allows it," he said.

Right behind Don I introduced myself to a gentleman wearing a small hydration pack, jogging along pushing a three-wheeled stroller with a preschooler in it. His name

is José Gonzalez, and his son in the running stroller was Juan Pablo. José answered the question "Why run or jog?" by gesturing toward his chest and saying: "To get healthy so I can stay healthy to raise my kids."

This is a theme I have often heard repeated by many others over the years, and I have felt the same way as a parent. Studies show that children sooner or later frequently take to the habits that the parents have demonstrated day to day, including exercise and fitness habits.

Angela Becherl and Ome Clarin were briskly walking behind the main string of runners and joggers. They stated that they each enjoy walking several miles a day, and particularly like spending the time socializing with one another on the walks.

All are welcome the next four Tuesdays at Run Club, even if you walk instead.

John T. Unger is a diplomate of the American Chiropractic Board of Sports Physicians, in his 25th year of practice in Montrose. He enjoys this overlapping season between real winter and real spring.



John T. Unger

Outdoors



PHOTO COURTESY OF P. KOWALSKI

Here Montrose County Sheriff's Posse members search a canal for a drowning victim. Summer thunderstorms bring an inherent risk of flash flooding.

Flash Floods: Don't let your trip be a washout

It's hard to imagine having flash floods here, in the valley, especially when it has been so dry for much of the summer. As the summer monsoon storms nail the mountains, however, it becomes a real possibility and one you need to be prepared for.

July 31, 1976 the Big Thompson River experienced a flash flood that swept through the canyon. It claimed the lives of 143 people, five of whom have yet to be found.

A wall of water nearly 20 feet high came through, washing away more than 400 homes and 50 businesses.

Just about all Colorado streams and rivers are vulnerable to flash flooding when an intense thunderstorm produces heavy rainfall in the mountains.

The steep mountain slopes and canyons funnel rainwater

into the creeks, streams and dry ravines, quickly turning them into raging torrents of water.

Floodwaters come as a huge wall of water, sometimes more than 20 feet high. This wall of water, which is moving at incredible speeds, is impossible to outrun. It has the power to wash away houses, buildings, cars, trees, and boulders and just about anything else in its path.

Here are a few things that you can do:

- First is to pay attention to the forecast before and during your trip. If your area is under a flash flood watch, it means that conditions are right for flooding to occur and you should take precautions. If



Mark Rackay

Tips from the Posse

you're in a flash flood warning area, it means that flooding is occurring or about to occur and you need to act immediately.

- Do not camp along streams or washes, especially at night when you are not aware of conditions outside. A flood can catch you while you are asleep.

Try to make your camp on ground that is significantly higher than the stream area.

Try to avoid streambeds and other drainage channels during or after a rainstorm, or anytime that heavy rain is possible.

If you are near a stream and the water begins to rise, treat the situation as a flash flood. A stream can rise several feet in

just a couple minutes.

- Always pay attention to what the weather is doing upstream from you. The storm may occur out of your sight and catch you by surprise. Remember, it does not have to be raining where you are for there to be a flash flood. Again, being a sky watcher is the correct thing to do.

- If all else has failed and you are caught in a flood, climb to safety. If a flash flood is catching you during a hike or camp, climb to higher ground immediately.

If all this rainy, monsoon weather is getting you down, cheer up. It will be snowing before you know it.

Mark Rackay is a freelance writer who serves as a director for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information, call 970-252-4033 or email info@mcspi.org.

Hunters urged to target bears near Aspen

ASPEN (AP) — Wildlife officials are urging hunters to focus on areas near Aspen where bears have repeatedly raided campsites for food.

The Aspen Times reports state officials considered hiring professional hunters with U.S. Wildlife Services to kill bears that were raiding sites at Crater Lake near the Maroon Bells. But now that the annual bear hunting season is underway, state wildlife officers are instead urging hunters to focus on that area and the surrounding upper Roaring Fork Valley.

Kevin Wright, district wildlife manager for the Aspen area, says "there's a lot of people out there that want to hunt bears. We're hoping over time that can help."

Hiring hunters with Wildlife Services isn't unprecedented. The agency was enlisted in 2011 after bears injured campers in tents in two separate incidents in the Crater Lake area.

Prescribed burn launched, more could follow

Fire officials with the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests, Ouray Ranger District, began a prescribed burn on the 25 Mesa Project area Sept. 17.

If conditions are favorable, additional units may be burned later in the week.

The burn area is located at the northern end of 25 Mesa Road, near the 25 Mesa Guard Station. Private land is located to the north of the project area with approximately 10 landowners and associated structures on those lands.

Hunters should be aware of the potential for this and other prescribed burns in the areas; however, they should be minimally affected.

Smoke may be visible in the area for several days after the burn is completed as vegetation in the interior of the burn continues to smolder. Fire officials will continue to monitor the burn area following completion to ensure public safety.