

Group runs offer more than fitness

BY CRISTINA PETERSON
For The Bulletin



Shared experiences create opportunities for people to connect and relate to each other.

This is certainly true for running.

A conversation on a run can take as many twists and turns as there are on a trail. Covering lots of ground on a long run probably means covering lots of topics, too. Adventure runs might lead to bad weather, navigating confusing trail junctions or just physically challenging terrain after a while. These all provide a chance to deepen trust as people make decisions together.

A hard workout also makes for great bonding. Some might say that misery loves company, but the more important aspect is doing hard things with others and to just know that you're not alone. The extra encouragement from someone else can make all the difference in finishing that last 800-meter repeat, pushing hard up one more hill or making the best of the last mile. In addition to the camaraderie and motivation that comes from sharing miles with others, there are also amazing tips and tricks, from handy gear to a new trail snack.

Another experience that invites connection with others is the adventure of motherhood. In these busy modern times, most women aren't living in villages where raising children is done in a communal man-

ner. So, without having observed others, there can be a lot of surprises from pregnancy to birth and through the early years of parenting.

When a person goes through something alone, it can leave them wondering what is normal, or searching possible solutions. In this internet age, it's easy to turn to Google or cruise the internet for answers. But often a conversation with someone else who has gone through something similar can not remind a person that maybe they are not the only one to experience something but might also lead to amazing tips that would never have been discovered otherwise. Of course, it's worth saying that what works for one runner, or one mom, may not work at all for another. Regardless, simply talking through a situation can make a person feel better or like they are less alone.

Central Oregon Running Klub's newest group run, the Mom Squad, aims to be a way for women to connect about both these experiences, running and mothering. The group welcomes moms in all phases of motherhood from pregnancy onward. Moms can meet up with strollers or solo to share some miles on the third Sunday of the month.

Currently, the group meets at Loge in Bend and will run for about 45 minutes. The paved path provides a great route that is wide enough to run and chat and is stroller



Submitted

Runners participate in a A Mom Squad group run in Bend.

friendly. It has a gentle grade, so it isn't steep in either direction. The path parallels the Cascade Lakes Highway to the U.S. Forest Service Welcome Station at the intersection with Forest Road 41 (Conklin Road). Even though the road is nearby, there is enough of a buffer in most places that it's barely noticeable. It meanders through some rocky formations and ponderosa pine forests.

Afterward, the group meets back up to chat and get to know each another over coffee. Future Mom Squad runs will feature special guests to lead a short yoga session after the run or to lead a discussion on certain topics. I've benefited immensely from the shared stories of other women as I am currently expecting my first baby in August. Prior to being pregnant, I also felt fitness ben-

efits from doing speed workouts on a weekly basis with a group. The accountability and the connections have been so valuable.

More and more group runs are starting up again around Central Oregon. If you're not a mom, there's likely a group that would suit you. Check out the CORK website: www.centraloregonrunningklub.org. Footzone, the local running store, also has some group runs and programs even for those new to running. Check those out on the Footzone website: www.footzonebend.com

Always follow the advice of your health care providers and listen to your body. But if you don't have any restrictions, join a group run not only for the fitness benefits but also to explore different places and to make new connections in our community.

TOP PICKS

WHERE TO EXPLORE

Hiking in the mountains

Ray Atkeson Memorial Loop — Named for the nature photographer, the short and easy 2.4-mile walk along the shore of Sparks Lake offers some of the best views in the Cascade Lakes area for the least effort. With the crystal blue waters mirroring the snow capped South Sister and Broken Top, there's not too much to complain about. The trail traverses over the lake's lava lined shore and makes a great evening walk to catch the sunset.

Tam McArthur Rim — You'll need to snag a Central Cascades Wilderness Permit to hike one of Central Oregon's most popular trails, but that could make it a little more enjoyable with slightly less hikers to contend with at the trailhead. The 5.3-mile, moderate trail near Sisters at the base of Broken Top gives stunning looks of the eastern slopes of the Cascades and beyond.

Wasco Lake Trail — You'll also need a Central Cascades Wilderness Permit for this one as you have to park and utilize the Jack Lake Trailhead to get to the small mountain lake. The 4.5 out-and-back trail near Camp Sherman travels through some burn areas so bring a hat and lots of water and shade may be at a premium. Also, pack the deet as you may also have to contend with the mosquitos. With Three Fingered Jack, creek traversing and wildflowers throughout the trail is great for a scenic day hike or an overnighter.

— Makenzie Whittle, The Bulletin



Mark Morical/Bulletin file

Mason Morical, 7, takes in the view of Middle and North Sister from atop Tam McArthur Rim in 2015.

Trails

Continued from B1

The new trails are predominantly geared toward mountain bikers and those on foot. Multiple horse trails can be accessed from the same trailhead but are separated from these new trails to minimize user conflicts. Combine them with the Blue-Belly Loop (2.7 miles) and Blue-Belly Stem (1.4 miles) to explore what the Cascade View Trailhead has to offer.

Quadruple Bypass

Quadruple Bypass is a new, approximately 2-mile trail on the canyon rim behind the Facebook data center in Prineville. This trail offers amazing views, often coming close to the canyon rim — keep young children and pets close to you! The trail includes challenging wooden "skinnies" that look like a game of Chutes and Ladders and offer mountain bikers the chance to build technical riding skills.

Quadruple Bypass is part of the 66 Trail System in

Prineville, a close-to-town trail network of approximately 8 miles of trail offering a huge variety of riding styles for the size of the trail system. While you're in the area, make sure to check out Trashalanche, a trail that deserves a spot among Oregon's top uniquely odd places. Check them out if you haven't already.

If you want to say thanks to the people and organizations that made them possible, give back by donating your dollars and volunteering your time and by being friendly and responsible when using our community's trails. Happy exploring!

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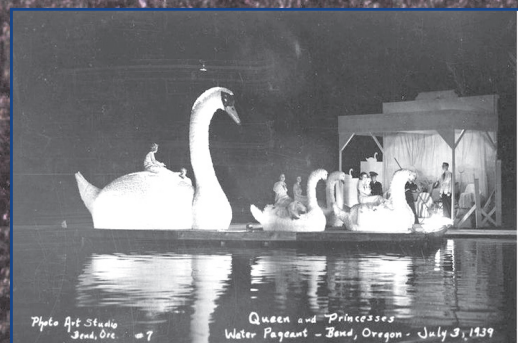
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