



MISSION

The Mission of We Run This City Youth Marathon Program is to encourage healthy habits and exercise in Cleveland's young people. With our running programs, we strive to teach young people to set and achieve goals, increasing their self-confidence as well as their fitness and endurance. Crossing the finish line is just the beginning!

ORGANIZATION

We Run This City Youth Marathon Program is a collaboration between the YMCA of Greater Cleveland, Cleveland Metropolitan School District, the Rite Aid Cleveland Marathon, The Cleveland Department of Public Health and Case Western Reserve University Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods.

STRUCTURE

WRTC is a 12-16 week program. Individual teams are formed at schools. The teams are led by teachers or volunteer coaches and assisted by YMCA coaches. The teachers/coaches are responsible for scheduling practices, submitting all paperwork and ensuring that their teams attend pre-race events (kickoff, conditioning clinic and practice races- 10k teams only).

WRTC offers the students a training schedule (which includes a nutrition component) that allows them to cover the distances necessary to be prepared to run in the Rite Aid Cleveland Marathon. A WRTC student does not have to be an athlete to participate in this program. Our goal for each student is completion rather than competition.

There are three options for training:

1. The marathon, where the students accumulate 25 miles of conditioning over 12 weeks and complete their last 1.2 miles on race day.
2. The 10k, where participants safely build up to running or walking 6.2 miles.

3. The half marathon, where participants safely train to run 13.1 miles on race day.

HISTORY

We Run This City Youth Marathon Program was launched in 2006 with 81, 6th-8th grader runners from 7 Cleveland Metropolitan School District schools. The program nearly doubled in 2007 to 192 participants, including participation of one high school. Other changes to the program in 2007 included the addition of a team of 10K runners. In 2008 WRTC expanded training options to add the half marathon and a change in venue for race day events. Previously the students were housed at the downtown YMCA before the race began, where they picked up their t-shirts, signed poster-sized thank you cards, posed for group pictures and listened to motivational speakers. Due to the increase in numbers, the staging area was moved to CSU, Woodling gymnasium (a move made possible by a generous donation from the Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance Department at CSU).

The big news in 2009, was the decision by CNN to cover the WRTC program as a Fit Nation feature. The program was treated to coverage by a CNN crew both on race day and the night before. CNN in partnership with the Y-USA, replicated parts of the program in other YMCA markets: San Francisco, Washington, D.C., Minneapolis, Chicago and Seattle.

During the 2013 program year there were 100 students recruited and 5254 students from 35 schools crossed the finish line of the Rite Aid Cleveland Marathon on May 19, 2013. Of the 545 that crossed the finish line 26 completed the half marathon, 182 ran the 10k, 337 completed the 1.2 mile run.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

We Run This City participants participate in a pre-race evaluation in January right before training starts and a post race evaluation after the race in late May. The evaluation measures changes in physical measurements (i.e., BMI, body composition, and blood pressure) changes in fitness measurements (PACER and Sit to Stand test for speed and endurance) as well as self-reported attitudes, intentions and behaviors (i.e, recreational choices, intentions to be active, physical fitness competency) and school related outcomes, such as school attachment, grades and attendance.

- Students were found to show significant improvements in performance on the Sit to Stand test(a test of lower body strength and balance) and the PACER(Progressive Aerobic Cardiovascular Run)
- There has been a significant reduction in blood pressure in students found to be pre-hypertensive and hypertensive.

Positive outcomes went beyond improvements in physical fitness level and included improved perceptions about physical activity among participating students.

SPONSORSHIP

Students that participate in WRTC do not pay to participate. The shoes, T-shirts, medals and race fees are free to every participant. Program staff undertake continued fundraising efforts to fully support the students. Fortunately, the corporate and private philanthropic communities in Cleveland recognize the value of We Run This City Youth Marathon Program and generously support it. With generous contributions from the Mt. Sinai Foundation, St. Luke's Foundation, Sisters of Charity Foundation , Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield, Kaiser, O'Neil Family Foundation, Panera, REACH and the YMCA of Greater Cleveland WRTC is able to provide programming for 1000 Cleveland students. In addition to the cash contributions WRTC is supported by many local organizations that provide in-kind donations to the program. If you are interested in sponsoring a school or providing funds or in kind donations to help this program continue to grow, expand and provide a high quality experience for participating youth, please contact Program Director, Tara Taylor @ 216 263-6298.

Save the Date

Rite Aid Cleveland Marathon – May 18, 2014