

“Moms in Motion” Set Sights on Half Marathon

By Sophie Braccini



L-R Jen McKenzie, Krista Benson, Kim Habas, Adrienne Spencer and Amy Campbell ran the half-marathon in November
Photo provided

You can see them on Thursday mornings at around 9:30 a.m. A group of female athletes meet at the Moraga Commons and start their running routine: one mile out (easy), five minutes out (hard), five minutes back (hard), and one mile cool down.

The group is called “Moms in Motion” and is training for the May 31 half marathon “See Jane Run” in Alameda. “We are a group of moms who want to have fun, meet friends and get in great shape,” says Lamorinda organizer Jen McKenzie.

“Moms in Motion” began in 1999 when teacher, runner, triathlete and mother Jamie Allison wanted to get support, and train some of her friends to complete a local triathlon. The group quickly expanded and now has more than 4,000 teams in 1,068 cities, 48 States and 10 different countries. One of these groups is the Lamorinda chapter that was started last August by Jen McKenzie.

“When I moved to Moraga with my family I wanted to find a way to make new friends, have fun in the outdoors and stay in shape,” says McKenzie. She advertised in the Lamorinda Moms Club newsletter and posted flyers at the Lafayette and Moraga community centers. The first group had about 12 moms, but is now 22 members strong. Word of mouth has brought in more runners.

The group is engaged in a 13-week session that is going to get them to the Alameda half marathon. The group trains three times a week on Tuesday evenings (at 6:30 p.m.), Thursday mornings (at 9:30 a.m.), and runs the longest distances over the weekends. McKenzie explains that women of all strengths make up her group, from experienced triathletes and marathon runners to beginning runners.

“I am probably one of the least experienced runners,” says Jessica Van Olst, mother of a 21-month-old boy. “I hadn’t run in five years when I joined the group. The most I ever ran was probably four miles. The first Saturday when we ran three miles I thought I was going to have a heart attack!”

Last Saturday, after just eight weeks of the program, she ran eight miles. “When I asked my husband Eric what he thought of it, he said this sounded more like a car drive to Walnut Creek,” Van Olst says.

The young mother believes that the team spirit of the group definitely helped with her progress. The most experienced runners give tips and cheer for each other. “This program has challenged me and upped my fitness level more than any gym had ever done before,” she says.

The other aspect of the group is philan-

thropic. Each “Moms in Motion” group chooses a charity they support to the level that’s comfortable for them.

The Lamorinda group chose “Dress for Success,” whose mission is to promote the economic independence of disadvantaged women by providing professional attire, a network of support and the career development tools to help women thrive.

After the May 31 half marathon, a new session of “Moms in Motion” will start in August targeting the Silicon Valley half-marathon. For more information about “Moms in Motion” and how to get involved, contact: jen_mckenzie@sbcglobal.net.