

# Kids run for FUNdraiser at the Dome

by Sarah Wetzel  
For the Plain Talk

The runners crouched at the starting line on the USD Dome track Tuesday, ready to spring forward at the cue from a starter. And they were off! The crowd cheered their favorite runners. No this wasn't a college track meet, or even a high school race. Tuesday, Vermillion elementary school children participated in the second annual Fun Run at the Dome. "Their energy for this has really been building up for a long time so hopefully they got it all out today," said Nicolette Kuchta, a first grade teacher at Austin Elementary. The grades took turns running the track, kindergarten and first-graders taking the first hour, then second/third, then fourth/fifth. The event was coordinated by the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) of Austin and Jolley Schools and the Parents and Teachers of St. Agnes (PTSA). The goal of the event was to encourage fitness, fundraise for school improvements, and teach teamwork. "Each student is a member of their school's team, and as such, every child will have a team T-shirt," the fundraiser's website read. "By working together to raise the most funds possible, students will learn the power of working together toward a common goal." This is slightly different from last year where individual prizes lessened the team-feeling according to Becca Jordre, the event coordinator. "The kids who didn't raise funds didn't get anything and we hated that," she said. "We just made it a team effort this year. The schools are each working toward a goal so they're all a team. Nobody's getting singled out." Jordre came up with the idea for the fun run while brainstorming new fundraising ideas. Jordre said the fun run was

decided upon as opposed to something like a 5k because then all the children could participate. "Last year we used a company to help us do it," Jordre said. "They sort of told us what to do and got us prizes, put us on a timeline. Everything was set up. We did it that way because we'd never done one before." And it was so much fun, they decided to keep it going, this time organizing it on their own, working since last summer getting sponsors and setting everything up. "It's a lot of work," Jordre said. "The next years will probably be less work. We really want to keep it happening every year because the kids have so much fun." And have fun they did for the second year in a row. "The kids come in and some of them have never been to the dome before and their eyes get real big that they get to run on the track," Jordre said. "A few college athletes come and put marks on their shirt. They get a mark when they complete a lap." According to Jordre, a 'lap' consisted of a third of the lap for younger kids and half a lap for older students. Students completed 30 or more laps, running and walking for about an hour. "It's pretty chaotic but it looks like the kids are having fun so that's all that matters," said volunteer USD student Danielle Anderson. "I was marking t-shirts and every time they came around they were so excited especially when they got more than the boxes," said another USD volunteer, Raelce Oberg. Volunteers like Anderson and Oberg ran water stations and a first-aid table to make the event run more smoothly. Parents were also encouraged to come and cheer the kids on. Jennifer Mincks, mother of second-grade Nathaniel, was in attendance last year as well. "I like just getting the kids out and active, getting them running,"

Mincks said. "Just having the support of the parents up here in the stands, I really like that." Mincks said though her son is more of a video-gamer and less of a runner, he really enjoyed the fun run last year. "His face was so red last year," she said. "It was so much fun to see him." Jordre herself had a first and third grader running in the event and said the excitement spread to those who are unable to participate. "We have preschoolers who are complaining that they don't get to run and we have some middle-schoolers who graduated after who wish they could have done it," she said. "Kids want to go to the Dome and run." According to Jordre, the fun run was the PTA's most successful fundraiser last year. Funds will be accepted for this year's fun run till the end of the week. "We don't expect it to bring in as much money this year partly because we're not doing big prizes and I think that was kind of a draw last year," Jordre said. "Each school has a goal. The money goes directly back to teacher grants and the art program and teacher appreciation days for the school." "We're only a couple hundred dollars short of our \$3,000 goal," said first-grade teacher Nicolette Kuchta of Austin Elementary. "It really helps us out. When we have a fun project to do we use those funds for that. I'm a new teacher



Second graders line up to begin running at the Dome Tuesday for the second annual Fun Run.

SARAH WETZEL / FOR THE PLAIN TALK

so there are a lot of things I didn't have and they really helped me out with that." St. Agnes School plans to use part of their funds raised by the fun run to contribute to a new playground. "We'll be looking for input on playground equipment as we get more of an idea of what we have for a budget and what we get for grants and such," administration told the St. Agnes students at a recent school assembly. "We want you to feel an ownership in what you have. We want you to feel like you're leaving a legacy behind." Though teachers and parents alike were excited to raise funds, the overall favorite part was seeing kids having a blast running. "They're not in PE every day,

they're not very active every day, they're more likely to play computer or video games but they all run and have a lot of fun," said Jordre. "For me that was really exciting to see." "We did this last year and it was a blast," Mincks said. "We liked just watching them and cheering them on. The funnest part was watching their faces when you cheered for them. They'd just jet. Then they'd slow down on the other side. Then they come back around and jet again." Lisa Sorensen watched her kindergartener participate in the run for the first time. "She had a good time, she had fun," Sorensen said. "She got to run with some of the kids from St. Agnes. That was nice, some

friends that she knows." Sorensen said their family attended the Relay for life last Sunday which got her daughter pumped for the fun run. "She was excited to raise the money and talk to friends and family," Sorensen said. "Just to see all the kids out here was really neat. They ran the whole time. They didn't even slow down. They just went for it." According to Jordre, the success of the second year is all the more reason to keep it going. "We have so many reasons to keep doing the fun run," she said. "I think eventually it will become a solid fundraiser."

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7:00 PM

Clay County 4-H Center  
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Request must include parcel number.

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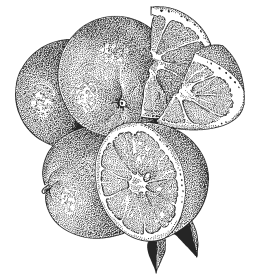
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Admission: \$3.00/person • Children 12 & Under Free

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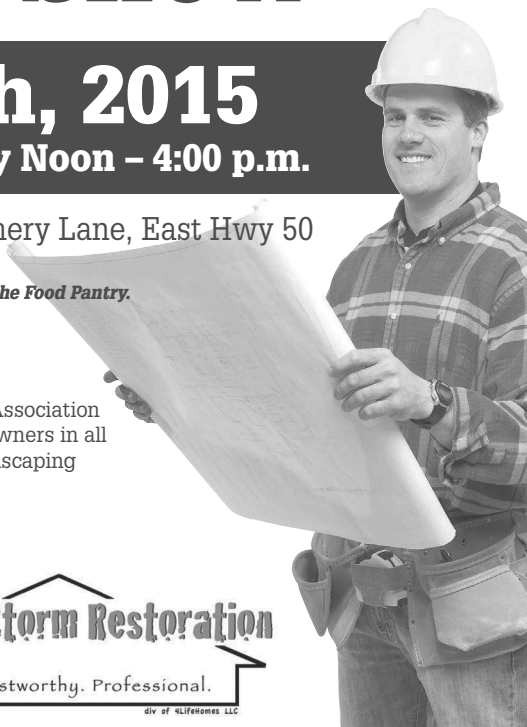
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