

Marathoners to aid kids' nutrition, fitness program

By Weldon B. Johnson

WELDON.JOHNSON@ARIZONAREPUBLIC.COM

For years, Ahwatukee resident Susan Loken has been willing to share her enthusiasm and knowledge of running with anyone looking to get into the sport.

Now she's expanding that to include children she may never even meet.

Loken, 43, has become marathon program director for Chances for Children-Arizona, a non-profit organization that implements nutrition and fitness programs in schools that might not otherwise be able to afford it.

Loken will be charged with training runners to complete the P.F. Chang's Rock 'n' Roll Arizona Marathon and Half Marathon. Those runners will raise money for Chances for Children-Arizona through pledges made by others. Each runner has a goal of \$1,000.

"I always want to do things to give back to the community," Loken said.

"When this opportunity came about, I felt it really was a dream come true."

Susan Loken

Marathon program director

"When this opportunity came about, I felt it really was a dream come true. I get to take all my successes and failures and experience and help train people for the marathon and half marathon. And they'll raise money for the cause."

Team Chances will begin training on Sept. 2, working up to the race on Jan. 13.

In addition to regular training sessions, the program will hold monthly seminars on training-related topics. The next seminar will be Aug. 29, and participants will have a shopping night at Sole Sports Running Zone, 1006 E.

Warner Road, Tempe.

"That will be our how-to-get-started seminar," Loken said. "We'll have a shopping night on that night too. The most important item you need to get started is shoes."

For the youngsters that Chances for Children-Arizona will serve, the program doesn't end with the race in January. The fitness and nutrition programs will carry over throughout the school year.

Students that take part in the program will also run their own marathon, although it will be spread out over the months between now and race day. By Jan. 13, they will have logged 25.2 miles.

"They'll do their final mile at the fun run at the marathon," Loken said.

Anyone interested in joining the Chances for Children running team can contact Loken at susan@chancesforchildrenaz.com or visit the Web site: www.chancesforchildrenaz.com.



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