**Human Race**

**NEWS, TRENDS, AND REGULAR RUNNERS DOING AMAZING THINGS**

**It's Her Honor**

A judge who lost 100 pounds through running shares the love with a local club BY MICHELLE HAMILTON

"WHO'S NEW HERE TODAY?" On a sunny Saturday morning in Campbell, California, 45 runners gathered in a park around their coach, Sharon Chatman. A middle-aged woman steps up, and Chatman, 66, a California superior court judge in Santa Clara County, folds her in a bear hug. The group claps and hoots, and a moment later, on Chatman's cue—"Take 60 seconds to meet and hug a Diva"—the runners greet each other and embrace.

"It has long been a Diva tradition to give out hugs because hugs help you to bond," says Chatman in her characteristic good cheer. "Sometimes the best thing you can do for a friend is to reach out with a hug. You both benefit. Hugs are inflation-proof, nonfatting, no monthly payments, no insurance requirements, theft-proof, nontaxable, nonpolluting, and of course, fully refundable."

Chatman may not look or sound like a typical running coach. Then again, the Red Power Divas, the warm and spirited group she founded in 2007, isn't your average running club. There are no fees or fundraising (Chatman felt they were barriers to fitness for many), and while the group trains for local races three days a week, year-round, crossing the finish line isn't the primary goal. "We're like a support group," says Heather Savage, 50, who volunteers as the Divas' program director. "People join to lose weight or train for a race, but they return for the camaraderie."

Chatman knows how life-changing peer support can be. Nine years ago, the five-foot-tall former collegiate basketball player, (yes, that's right) weighed 280 pounds. She took pills to manage high blood pressure. Walking a half block was painful. Her doctor told her if she didn't lose weight, she would die, so Chatman joined a weight-loss support group and began walking. Her first workout was a

Photographs by MATHEW SCOTT
slow shuffle to the corner and back. A week later, she made it around the block, then two blocks, then a mile. She says encouragement from her friends, in and out of the support group, fueled her progress. After eight months, she added running and finished a local 10-K. "The medal hangs on a bookshelf in her chamber. "It's the medal I'm most proud of," she says.

Then in 2006, 100 pounds lighter and medication-free, she ran-walked the Nike Women's Marathon, crossing the finish line in just over six hours with tears running down her cheeks.

It was a transformative experience that she wanted to pay forward. And so a few months after the marathon, Chatman e-mailed friends and colleagues announcing the launch of the Red Power Divas. "'Red' conveys passion, 'Power' is for strength, and 'Divas' captures each person's individual fabulousness," she says. "I wanted to bring out a woman who thinks she can't and show her the athlete inside." Chatman expected a dozen people to show up. There were 60.

"On the first day, Sharon had a guest speaker, a middle-aged, not-so-skinny woman with dozens of medals around her neck," Savage says. "I had never run before but thought, Oh, she's me. Now seven years later, I'm the woman with 24 medals."

Chatman initially tailored the program toward women, but Divas started bringing their husbands, boyfriends, and kids. So Chatman quickly added Divos and FitKidz to the roster. While parents do their long run, kids log walk-run miles in preparation for a five-mile race.

"I ran my first half-marathon and my daughter ran the five miles, and I love that we achieved those two milestones together," says Sadie Ruiz, a behavioral therapist and mom to 8-year-old Olivia.

To date, Chatman has helped more than 1,300 people start running or walking. Multiple members have lost countless pounds, and more than half have finished their first 5-K, 10-K, or half-marathon.

Chatman proudly notes that the Divas include people who are 300 pounds and 98 pounds, walkers who barely beat the sweeper van, runners who have qualified for Boston, kids as young as 5, and seniors in their 80s. Entire families turn out for Saturday workouts, as well as widowers, retirees, single parents, and teenagers.

To manage the variety, Chatman has established four training levels (walk, run-walk, run, and kids only), which are led by 22 peer coaches. Along with Saturday's long run, members can also attend Tuesday track sessions and Thursday group runs.

"My daughter assured me no one would laugh or push me to do what I didn't want to, so I tried it and love it," says Elaine Vierra, 60, who struggled to walk a quarter mile at first and has now completed dozens of 5-Ks.

The group's supportive and inclusive environment has had a profound effect on many. Ruiz notes that since joining FitKidz, her daughter is more confident and doing better in school. Nan Caldwell, 67, discovered she is competitive. The retired elementary-school teacher has dropped three pants sizes and won first in her age group at 65. "Sharon made me realize I am stronger than I thought," she says.

Divas and Divos are quick to share their affection for the group, though some say that new members should be advised: "You have to hold your breath sometimes," says Ruiz, "because Sharon hugs you so hard."

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THE INTERSECTION Where running and culture collide

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To prep for her role as the petite Claire Underwood on *House of Cards*, Robin Wright says: "Running gets everything done, doesn't it?"

**Snappy Shoes**

Adidas is launching a mobile app in August that will let users print their favorite photo on a pair of shoes.

**Speedy Superhero**

Actor Tom Cavanagh, a real-life marathoner, plays a physicist who creates The Flash in a new TV series about the speedy comic-book character.