

RunningBrooke to Celebrate 10 Years of Success

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FOUNDER RUNNINGBROOKE

It's hard to believe, but RunningBrooke turns 10 years old this fall. A decade ago, RunningBrooke was little more than an idea, thought up on a run, and now we're a dedicated team bringing movement to the daily lives of thousands of kids, schools and neighborhoods across Alexandria.

But we're not the only thing that has changed in 10 years. Back then, the science was murkier, but that didn't stop the families, teachers and administrators of Alexandria City Public Schools and the RunningBrooke volunteers, partners and donors from embracing the notion that physical movement sparks learning.

These days, the science is crystal clear, as author of the groundbreaking book *Spark, The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain*, Dr. John Ratey, detailed at the RunningBrooke Move2Learn Summit in January: exercise literally wakes up our brain and prepares it to learn.

And so, as we prepare to mark this 10th anniversary, we wanted to take a moment to say thank you to this remarkable community of believers who work to spark happy, healthy, learning-ready kids every single day. Here are 10 reasons to be truly proud of your work:

1. Students in ACPS are begging to read. Thanks to the Pedals and Pages program dreamt up by Alexandria teacher April Rodgers and originally funded by RunningBrooke, students are clamoring for brain boosts between classes and during the school day where they can pedal a stationary bike while reading a book. The pilot was such a hit at the new Ferdinand T. Day Elementary School that ACPS will expand



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Brooke Curran, center holding scissors, is joined by elected officials and local children at the official opening of the Four Mile Run playground Sept. 14 in Arlandria. Curran's RunningBrooke nonprofit worked with the city and local donors to build the community playground.

it to every elementary school in the district in a nation-leading effort.

2. Teachers are empowered to support their students. Each year, RunningBrooke offers grants for classroom supplies and programs that teachers want to implement. The results are programs both big—hallways for sensory exploration and the aforementioned stationary bikes—and small—cup stacking and alternative seating—that help kids truly learn.

3. Mathletes are the new cool kids on campus. Math mastery is vital to the future success of our children and our economy. By combining movement and math, our session designed for 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders breaks down complex concepts and builds brain function, working memory, focus and social skills.

4. We're always learning—and sharing what we know. Jan Olmstead, our Move2Learn Program Director, leads professional

development sessions with ACPS teachers and administrators to support them as they marry movement with their existing lesson plans.

5. Learning doesn't start or stop with a school bell, so we fund innovative programs that incorporate physical activity before, during and after school to help kids thrive throughout the school day. Over 10 years, we've worked with more than 40 local nonprofit partners, including Local Motion Project, Girls on the Run and PK Move.

6. Access to physical activity at home matters too, and children are far more likely to visit playgrounds near their home. For that reason, RunningBrooke has built three new playgrounds and renovated two others in underserved sections of Alexandria, giving local families a safe and fun place to get outside, have fun and move a lot more.

7. We're part of the national conversation. Looking for high-level changes, we've invited thought-leaders on how we think about physical activity right here to Alexandria. We've already mentioned Dr. John Ratey but other summit speakers include Mike Kuczala, author of *The Kinesthetic Classroom*, Teaching and Learning through Movement, and Charlene Burgeson, Executive Director of Active Schools.

8. Parents set the standard. Be on the lookout in your kids' backpacks for take-home reading, Tic Tac Toe movement activities, or join us at your PTA meeting to learn even more movement tools for home.

9. The evidence is behind us, but it's also right in front of our eyes. Yes, national thought-leaders are speaking out on this issue. But grassroots changes are happening in the classroom. With

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RunningBrooke's Move2Learn Movement Challenges, schools and teachers compete to get their students moving most. Ninety-seven percent of teachers who participated said daily brain boosts had a positive effect on classroom efficiency and structure.

10. It's working. As one teacher shared with us, "Thank you for the toolkits and trainings! The positive comments from teachers AND students were incredible. I'm absolutely convinced it is tied to our awesome SOL results this year!"

When you're doing work like this, it's easy to fo-

cus on how much more work there is to be done. And of course, we have big plans for the future—it's a marathon after all, and we aren't even halfway to the finish line.

But today, right now, let's look back at how far we've come. Take off those running shoes, put on your dancing shoes and join your fellow Alexandrians on Oct. 19 for a night under the stars with dinner, live music and "runner's high" libations to toast 10 years of brain-boosting movement for the children of Alexandria.

For more information, visit runningbrooke.org.