

# idea corner

## Ridge Runners

When Tazewell County teacher and 4-H leader, Rod Altizer, noticed that an unusually high number of his 5th grade students couldn't pass the *standard physical fitness test at the end of the last school year*, he was concerned. Why were students so "out of shape" and unconcerned about good health?

This question was on Rod's mind throughout the summer. During this same time, he was reading a book on jogging for fitness, and developing his own jogging program. Thus, his plan for bringing physical fitness to his students began to grow.

Altizer asked his students last fall if they'd like to go on a cross-country run to California and become a "Ridge Runner"? Immediate enthusiasm for the idea was evident, so Rod went on with his plan.

First he sent a letter home to the parents of each student explaining the need for improved physical fitness and his proposed jogging program. He described the type of clothing and shoes each child would need and requested that the parents send these items to school if they wanted their child to participate.

The rules were simple: Everyone jogs every day that the weather permits, on his/her own time, and in his/her chosen place. No one should run more than *one mile per day to begin with*. No one should run so fast he/she can't talk to someone else while jogging. For each mile a gold star will be put next to the student's name on the class "Jog Log."



At the end of the school year, each person who has jogged 100 miles or more will become a "Ridge Runner" and receive a special Ridge Runner t-shirt. They pretended they were running across the United States and planned to make California by May.

At each 4-H Club meeting, a designated member gives the "Jog Log Report." Everyone is jogging. Some have reached the three-mile-a-day marker. In November, 2 students had already passed the 100-mile goal and no one had less than 30 miles on his/her record.

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