

RUNNING SHORTS

You're never too old to run

By Ken Johnson

If you think you're too old to run, tell it to Wendell Londeen, 81, of Huntsville. He runs 3 to 5 miles five or six days a week and has completed the Aramco Houston Half Marathon (13.1 miles) the last two years. His goal is to run a full marathon (26.2 miles). Wendell reports that running makes him feel better, both physically and mentally.

Wendell takes away an excuse many seniors use for not running or getting some other form of exercise on a regular basis. Don't waste anymore time sitting around feeling like you are old; get out and run and change your life. Start off slow and gradually build up your distance. Don't worry about your speed. That will improve with time. The important thing is making a commitment to yourself that you will be consistent in your running. Most of us have busy schedules. Make running a top priority. Running may not add years to your life, but it will add quality to your life. Be sure to consult with your doctor before starting a running or other exercise program.

True Cousins, 73, of Huntsville started running in 1981 for health and weight control. He runs 3 miles three times a week and participates in many 5K (3.1 miles) races throughout east Texas. He also contributes to the sport by working as a volunteer at races and by serving as the treasurer in the Seven Hills Running Club (<http://www.7hills.us>).

Then, there's John Burick, 74, of Huntsville. John started running for fitness when he was 45 and has never looked back. He has completed 26 marathons and is still running 15 to 20 miles a week.

Helen Klein of Sacramento, California should inspire us all. She retired from nursing in 1978 at age 55. Rather than assuming a sedentary life style, she decided to take up running. She started on a homemade track around her front yard and finished last in her first race, a ten miler. Now, at 83, she holds 75 World and American running records. She has completed over 100 marathons and 142 ultramarathons (races longer than a marathon). She is the oldest person in the world to complete a 100-mile run. She also holds the world marathon record for women over 80. The list of her accomplishments go on and on. Helen has participated in the Sunmart Texas Trail Endurance Run (31 miles) at the Huntsville State Park for many years, while her husband directed that race. Her creed is discipline, determination and dedication.

While few of us can expect to set world records, we can take inspiration from Helen Klein's creed and set and achieve our own running goals. Regardless of your age, if you follow that creed, you will surprise yourself by what you can accomplish. Get started now.