

# Taking it in stride

*Valley runners form club to keep people moving*

By SEAN AMMERMAN

When Barbara Schweppe's marathon training ended last year, she didn't want to give up the hobby or the friends she made through the program.

The solution: create a new running club with her former marathon coach, Chris Mech.

A group of runners who participated in the Red Rock Running Company Marathon Training program have formed the core of the Valley Striders, which became an official nonprofit club in March.

Mech, the president, and

## To participate

Striders membership is \$25. For more information on the Valley Striders visit [www.valleystriders.com](http://www.valleystriders.com) or e-mail [valleystridersadministrator@cox.net](mailto:valleystridersadministrator@cox.net).

Schweppe, the vice president, are trying to build on the club's 20-plus membership and spread their love of distance running.

"We want to appeal to both runners and walkers," said Schweppe, of West Valley. "We want to combine both groups so maybe the walkers will learn more about running, and the runners in turn may mentor some of the walkers."

Since Schweppe, 55, completed her first marathon almost a year ago, she has become a serious running advocate.

Never track star growing up, she said training for marathons have changed her life.

"Whatever ails you, running will help," Schweppe said. "Whether it's physical or mental, try to learn how to run and the discipline of the training. It's a good self esteem builder."

The club, which meets up to three times a week, consists of marathon veterans and novice walkers.

Many of the members are training for a marathon or are just trying to stay in shape.

Mech, who coached the marathon training program, said the crew became so close they continued to train together after the program ended.

"We're a group of friends with a running problem," Mech said. "We wanted to continue the training program and stay friends."

Training for a marathon alone can be difficult, especially for first-time marathon runners.

The Valley Striders focus on providing support to help its members complete their goals.



JUMMEL HIDROSOLLO/SPECIAL TO THE HOME NEWS

**Bridget Cochran with the Valley Striders track club goes for the morning run through the trails of Summerlin.**

"The hardest thing about running on your own is getting out the door," Mech said. "It's much easier to get up and do it when you have that camaraderie."

Summerlin resident Michelle Branaugh, who is training for San Diego's Rock and Roll Marathon in June, said training with a group of friends makes her more accountable for her progress.

Branaugh, who has an athletic background as a pilates instructor at a sports therapy clinic, said nothing prepared

her for her first marathon.

"I'm in pretty good shape, but there is nothing like running your first marathon," she said. "It's definitely a humbling experience."

The Valley Striders meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays for short runs and on Saturdays for a long run anywhere from 4 to 12 miles.

On Tuesdays, the club meets at the flat trail at W. Wayne Bunker Family Park to work on speed. Thursdays are reserved for strength workouts, which are usually done at a hill.

The club meets early in the morning or in the evening to avoid the summer heat.

Mech, who has completed more than a dozen marathons, modeled the Striders after a club he ran with in New Jersey.

"There wasn't a running club like the one I was used to in New Jersey here," he said. "What I would like to see is the group grow and grow until it breaks off into another group so more people will join."

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