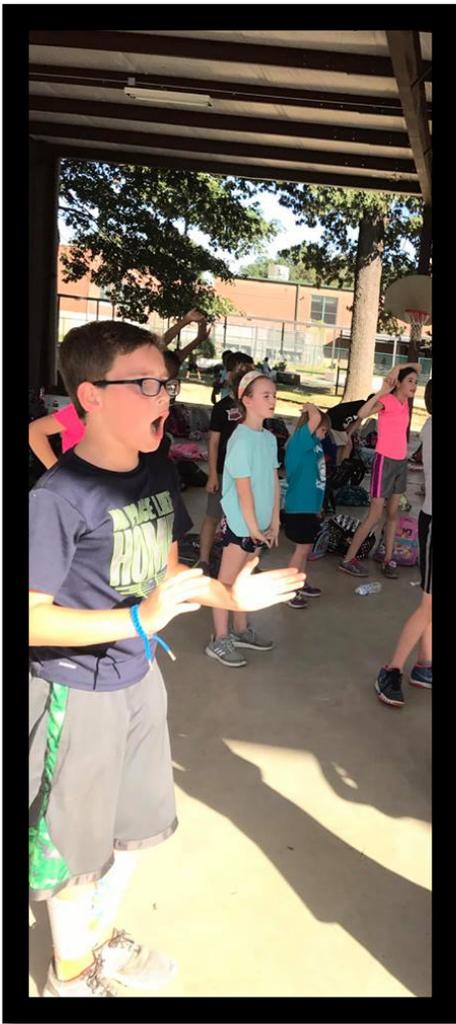


# MARATHON KIDS

## **Dedication Meets Creativity: Meet Shelby County's Coach Andy Martin**



Coach Andy Martin, a K-5 P.E. teacher at Grahamwood Elementary in Shelby County, Tennessee, takes some serious initiative. After hearing about Marathon Kids at one of his district learning days, Coach Andy applied for a grant to start a run club at his school – and never knew how quickly it would take off.

“I thought this would be a cool way to get kids excited about getting up and moving around, and I wanted to make it feel like a real sports team for them,” said Coach Andy. “We ended up having 85 kids sign up for the run club! We planned to meet once a week and work for about an hour – run laps, practice sprints, do exercise warm ups and routines.”

But aside from being an incredible implementor of the program, Coach Andy has taken steps to truly embody some key pillars of Marathon Kids. Like his incredible ability to

engage with his community and foster a sense of unity and teamwork.

“We live here in Memphis, so have a lot of universities in the area and it just dawned on me one day to reach out the community and make it an even bigger program than it is,”

said Coach Andy. “By doing that, one of the local universities, Christian Brothers University, actually contacted me, asking if I could bring our Marathon Kids out to have a joint practice with their track and field team. It was such a good experience for both groups that we formed a partnership – like having big brothers and sisters as mentors.

The coach there loves how his athletes love taking little kids out there. And my kids really look up to them and get autographs and then get to run together.”

But here’s something really special: it doesn’t stop there. Coach Andy has taken every opportunity he’s been given or created himself and has run with it (pun intended). He’s planning to continue the partnership with the university and because interest has been so high, they planned and hosted a Jog-A-Thon fundraiser together in December. They split the proceeds with the university, each party taking home around \$550. As it’s the first year of the Christian Brothers University track and field team, Coach Andy says they’re really learning together, supporting each other and he looks forward to further building the relationship between their programs.

Coach Andy’s dedication and excitement has bled into the community in other important ways, too. For example, one of his assistant Coaches is a parent who has done her own work to ensure the success of their runners.

“I work in an “optional school,” meaning we have a real mix of incomes and socio-economics in our students. We have a really involved parent as an assistant Coach



and she talked to her own church to do a donation drive for running shoes. When the first drop-off happened, people from her church were bringing brand new shoes that they had purchased for the drive! I normally don't cry at work for happy reasons – but it was a moment I teared up.”

Thanks to his commitment, creativity and passion for changing the health of kids, Coach Andy has been a catalyst for positive change in his community. Thankfully for his Marathon Kids and for Memphis, it doesn't look like he's slowing down anytime soon.

“Every day, I have kids coming and knocking on my door to see if they can join the run club,” said Coach Andy. “I keep having to promise that they can join next year. I have to grow the program and get more coaches just so all these kids can participate.”

### **Coach Andy's Marathon Kids Tips:**

- Structure is key! Plan out practices and events using the helpful information given to you by Marathon Kids.
- Reach out to your local community to get others involved. You can get motivational speakers and coaches to help out.
- Teach with passion and enthusiasm, as your students will feed off it!
- Make an effort to give positive praise and feedback to all participants to increase motivation.
- Above all else, remember to have fun!

