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## Up and running in Rockport

By Gail McCarthy  
Staff Writer

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More than 140 adults and children are expected to take part in an inaugural fun run Saturday morning, spearheaded by two Rockport Elementary School teachers as part of a larger effort to get residents moving.

The race is an outgrowth of master's degree work by Phil Whitley, a new third-grade Rockport teacher who was studying the effects of exercise on classroom learning.

Saturday's events are a 100-yard dash for tots, a 1-mile fun run and a 5-kilometer run starting from the school and going to the tip of Bearskin Neck and back.

While Whitley was working on his master's thesis on exercise and the brain, his colleague Erin Caniff, the school's physical education teacher, was reading the book "Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain," by Harvard Medical School professor John Ratey.

"Then the ideas morphed into my class exercising the first half hour of the day, which went along with my research," said Whitley. "And then it morphed into the whole third grade exercising the first half hour of the day, and then it morphed into Erin and I wanting to put together a 5K race."

So far, they have had success in attracting participants, with 70 people signed up for the 5K and about the same number signed for the 1-mile fun run. There will be various divisions, including one for a parent and child.

The race will go on rain or shine.

This year, Caniff started a running club that has attracted more than 100 students of all ages.

"It is our mission to get the community exercising and seeing the benefit of exercise," said Whitley. "We wanted a culminating event."

He and Caniff already have ideas for next year.

"Our thoughts for next year are to perhaps have a 1-mile race in fall, a 2-mile race in the late fall, and a 3-mile race in spring," he said. "We're excited about how it's going and for the race on Saturday," he said.

Whitley already has seen the impact on the children.

"What I've seen in my class is that not only does it focus my kids better, especially ones with attention issues, but it helps them settle in more. It also has improved the self esteem of my students and they are excited about school," he said. "They are learning a lifestyle."

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Rockport on the move

What: "To the Bear and Back" 5K race, 1-mile fun run, and 100-yard Tot Trot.

When: Saturday; 5K starts at 9:30 a.m. Registration opens at 8:30 a.m.

Where: Rockport Elementary School.

Who it benefits: Rockport PTO.

Details: Strollers welcome; raffle and cookout to follow. T-Shirts for the first 150 entries. Prizes will be awarded for the top male and female finishers in each age bracket.

How much: In advance, \$20 per individual and \$50 for a family for the 5K, \$10 and \$40 for the 1-mile race; fees rise by \$5 on race day. Forms can be downloaded at Rockport Elementary School website, reached via [www.rockport.k12.ma.us](http://www.rockport.k12.ma.us). Questions can be emailed to [res5kroadrace@gmail.com](mailto:res5kroadrace@gmail.com).