

A Life On The Run

By LISA PEARSON

lpearson@mediageneral.com

It wasn't long ago that FishHawk resident Steve Dunn was working as a systems engineer for a construction company. When he was offered a promotion and the opportunity to move to Jacksonville however, Dunn, 47, decided the new position wasn't going to cut it for him.

He left his successful career as an engineer to focus on his hobby, running, and opened Hit the Trails, a running specialty store in FishHawk Ranch.

"I think my supervisors thought I was crazy," said Dunn.

It started from a simple conversation. One day while running with a friend, they chatted about how great it would be to start a running club in FishHawk.

"I used to go to all these races, and I enjoyed the social aspect of it very much. What I didn't like was that I didn't know anyone. I thought if there was a running club, there'd be a social group to run together," Dunn said.

So he now heads a running club with more than 160 members and has a running shop in the key business district of FishHawk Ranch.

Dunn says his store is unique for several reasons. First, he can take one look at your foot and tell you what kind of running shoe you should be wearing to maxi-

mize your running performance.

Second, he offers a free performance evaluation on the treadmill when you purchase shoes in his store.

"By videotaping a runner, we can evaluate and correct that person's strides," said Dunn.

Dunn says that he sells everything a large sporting goods store carries, but in his opinion, he offers more personalized service. He also is an active part of the community, which can't always be said for big box stores.

"There's a good reason for the community to keep me in business," said Dunn, referring to several ways in which he contributes to the immediate community.

Dunn is currently serving his first year as the girls cross country coach at Newsome High School and the boys and girls distance track coach.

"I love it. I love working with the kids. One of the first things I try to teach them is that there is a pain of discipline and a pain of regret," Dunn said.

As a local business owner, Dunn hosts several races which benefit many community members. Last year, \$1,000 was donated to Newsome High School for a track scholarship and another one will be given this year. With new races added almost regularly, other groups are also benefiting. In January,

the FishHawk Road Race earnings of \$12,000 were distributed among Colleen Bevis Elementary, FishHawk Creek Elementary, Randall Middle School and Newsome High School.

Other recipients have been Pediatric Cancer and Girl Scouts.

"The running, the races...it's not about the store. Yes, I like the fact that I live only a mile away from my work, but I love doing this. Sometimes I can't believe this is what I do every day." Dunn, who also offers personal coaching and group training said, "It doesn't feel like work to me at all."

Hit the Trails is located at 16144 Churchview Drive, Suite 105, Lithia, FL. Call (813) 681-6141 or visit hitthetrails.com.



LISA PEARSON/Staff photo
Running store owner and Newsome High School Track and Cross Country Coach Steve Dunn discusses the differences in running shoes. Dunn says his hands-on approach with customers is a reason his store is successful.



In May, Dunn will host a two-hour clinic for middle schoolers about to enter high school. Here, clinic attendees practice a drill.



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