

The ultimate fitness challenge

Are you ready for a new fitness challenge? Why not start training for a marathon? Yes, a marathon, 26.2 miles of running or, better yet, self-discovery.

Were you an exercise enthusiast and somewhere along the way (exams, career, family) your priorities changed? What better way to have increased stamina and mental clarity than taking up running again or starting for the first time? Of course check with your physician before starting a vigorous exercise routine.

Don't be overwhelmed with the prospect of 26.2 miles before you. Be inspired and tell everyone your plan. There are probably local running clubs in your area that you can join, learn some new training tips and make some new friends.



While many of us have participated in a charity 5K, let's make a commitment to do something more this year. Let's make a commitment to carve out one hour a day to devote to our physical and mental well being.

This time next year, the 26.2 miles could be a great memory. For more information on marathon training plans visit www.runnersworld.com or www.marathontraining.com. Both of these web sites offer training plans for the beginner and the more advanced runner. Both sites have plans to take you from your current fitness level to the ultimate fitness challenge, the marathon.

Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)

MRSA is a type of bacteria that has become widespread through hospitals, nursing homes, locker rooms and other community settings. MRSA can cause skin and invasive infections.

Why is MRSA so harmful? The bacteria in MRSA over the last several years and even decades has become resistant to current antibiotic therapy, making it difficult to treat and difficult to cure. It can even be fatal.

MRSA is contagious and is transmitted by skin-to-skin contact or by touching contaminated surfaces or items. This makes locker rooms a breeding ground for infection.

How do you protect yourself from MRSA? The best preventative method is proper hygiene, including washing hands with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Any cuts or abrasions should be covered to avoid becoming infected. Avoid sharing personal items such as towels, razors and other items that contact bare skin.

For more information on MRSA, visit www.cdc.gov.

Register to vote

If you are like me, you are already tired of hearing the campaign promises, and we still have months to go before the election.

Is your voter registration information current or do you need to register to vote? Each state has specific guidelines and different registration deadlines for the voter registration process.

For a general overview of the national guidelines, visit the Federal Election Commission's web site at www.fec.gov or call (800) 424-9530. There is a voter registration link that will guide you through the registration process or call your state's Secretary of State office. Let your voice be heard by registering to vote and participating in the next election.

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Editor's note: Do you have an idea for an Advantage Point? Please contact the Phoenix at lmorales@alphasigmaalpha.org or write Advantage Points, P.O. Box 681130, Indianapolis, IN 46268.



Keeping up with your New Year's resolutions

After several weeks, how are you doing on your New Year's resolutions? Are you sticking to your budget, your exercise routine and your healthier lifestyle? If you are not, you are like most Americans.

By now, the running shoes already have dust on them. It is not too late to get back on track. Just start today. Schedule exercise time into your day. Make an appointment with your checkbook and bills to keep them all straight.

Many companies have employee assistance programs that can provide you with stress management counseling or other services. Check with your human resources department to see what services are available for free.

Many college campuses also offer free services to students. For other helpful tips, check out these web sites:

Nutrition & fitness:
www.americanheart.org
www.bodyforlife.com

Happiness & self-empowerment:
www.pledgepower.com

A guide to quit smoking:
1-800-ACS-2345 or www.cancer.org