

Moms on the Run can't be stopped

Running group manages to juggle families, careers to stay in shape

By **ALAN WECHSLER**
Staff writer

Ten years ago, Annie Serafini started a runner's movement.

It was after she gave birth to her third child. Serafini was looking to get back into shape, and wanted to take up running. But she didn't do it alone.

The Niskayuna resident recruited some friends and neighbors to join her. The women — mothers all — started off by running two minutes, walking three. And each week they'd run more, and walk less.

Word spread about these active moms, and the group found a name: Moms on the Run. Today, more than 50 women are involved, including the founder.

Serafini gets out at 6 a.m. for her training. This Saturday, she'll run with more than 3,000 women — and an unknown quantity of mothers — at the Freihofer's Run for Women in Albany.

"A lot of us aren't setting the world on fire with any major times, but we're trying to stay in shape and set a good example for our kids," she said.

She set such a good example for her own kids, her two teenage daughters will be running, too.

"Anyone can do this," she said. "But start slow and don't give up."

Nancy Briskie of Rotterdam says having a flexible approach to training helped her run while her two kids were younger. At the time, she'd run around her block in winter, a quarter-mile per lap, after the kids went to bed. That way she'd be close to the house if there were any problems.

Today, she also credits another factor: a supportive partner, in this case her husband.

"Without that," she said, "I don't know how you could go and do it."

George Regan, Freihofer's event director, said he didn't know how many runners in the race had kids at home. But he said he'd recommend running to any busy person, no matter how harried.

In fact, it's the busiest folks who might benefit from a regular running schedule, he said.

"What these women have found is running allows them to live their lives with a higher quality," he said.

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Niskayuna

"It gives them the energy; it gives them the strength and focus to be able to handle all those tasks well."

Karen Cusato knows what he means. A Guilderland math teacher who has only recently gone back to work full-time, Cusato is a mother of six children, including a set of 5-year-old quadruplets.

She's been running the Freihofer's race on and off since 1980, and hasn't let kids get in the way. She'll typically get up before 5 a.m. to run five or six miles three times a week. On weekends, her husband runs Saturday, she runs Sunday.

"It's a good stress reliever," she said. "After you go on a run, you can be a better parent than before you left."

She's certainly not slowing down. She's achieved her best time in the past few years. And last weekend, she drove to Vermont to run a marathon. Her mother, plus aunts and friends, help out by volunteering to watch the kids (though most balk at watching all six).

Her advice: Accept help.

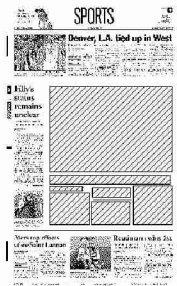
"If anyone offers to watch the kids, definitely take advantage," said Cusato, who is not shy about asking friends to watch the kids so she can run. "It's worth it."

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Freihofer's Run for Women

■ **When, where:** Saturday, downtown Albany

■ **More information on Web:** <http://freihoferstrun.com> and <http://twitter.com/freihoferstrun>





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KAREN CUSATO and her husband, Pat, sit on their couch with their six children in their home in Guilderland. The kids are, from left, Francesca, 10, Anthony, 9, Victoria, 5, Gabriella, 5, Robert, 5, and William, 5. Karen also has a full-time job, yet is able to run five or six miles three times a week. She also recently ran in a marathon.