



2026 GDCA PEPPERJACK KIDS RUNNING PROGRAM

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Just a short note that for the next several weeks, your child will have the opportunity to participate in fitness drills that, over time, will prepare them to run 2 miles as part of the 2026 Pepperjack Kids Running Program. In cooperation with the Gasparilla Distance Classic Association, this running program is offered at your child's participating City of Tampa Parks and Recreation Center. The training program will include valuable life skills training that, if taken seriously, will result in their choosing to live a more healthy, safe, and balanced lifestyle. Through the Pepperjack Kids Running Program, staffed by City of Tampa Parks and Recreation Department certified staff, your child will be introduced to running as a lifestyle activity with the concept that being fit can be fun! As you know, physical activity is essential to a healthy lifestyle.

All registered participants will be invited to run the final 2-miles in this year's Publix Gasparilla Distance Classic Half Marathon on Sunday, February 22, 2026. Here, they can put their training skills to work by running the final 2-miles, crossing the finish line, and cheering on the Half Marathon runners.

All runners in the program will also have the opportunity to run in the Publix Too Good for Drugs Jr. Gasparilla Distance Classic on Saturday, February 14, 2026, at Jefferson High School. Here, they can put their training skills to work by running one mile on the track and crossing the finish line.

Initial outreach and assessment will begin the week October (13th). This eight-week training program will introduce valuable life skills such as Personal Goal Setting, Team Building, Healthy Life Choices, Making the Right Choices, and Effects of A Strong Heart and Lungs, to name a few. Furthermore, this running program will not focus on "winning" but on developing as a team.

Participation requires that BOTH parent or guardian and child sign the "**Student/Parent Commitment Form**", making it *their* commitment to completing the training/program. Your child's commitment to this program demonstrates their desire to be a leader. Please remember to congratulate your son or daughter on wanting to better themselves and set an example for others. Once signed, they must hand it back to their Parks Team Leader.

That's all for now. We will keep you informed and updated on the kids' training dates, schedules, and any extra events that will be a part of their training. The object is to get everyone involved and conscious about healthy lifestyles.

Susan Harmeling,
GDCA Executive Director

Gary Williams, CPRP
Team Supervisor, Parks & Recreation

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Team Supervisor, Parks & Recreation