

## Midway Mile Markers

Four years ago I created Midway Mile Marker Club an after school walking/running club for my students and teachers. I wanted a way to encourage walking/running in a fun setting for my school. I also wanted to extend the fitness excitement to their family members in hopes that they would continue exercising when they program finished. The program is geared for my 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. We meet every Wednesday after school starting second semester of school.

Each year I plan out a different route we would take and cities we would visit on our “virtual” walk across America. I then figure out the total mileage and then equate out how many miles 1 lap around our track equals. For example, last year we virtually walked from Madawaska, Maine to San Diego, California. The total miles for that trip was 3,580. (1 lap =20 miles) Dividing it out I had my students complete 179 laps on our track.

Last year we went through 11 Cities in 11 different States along our journey. During each club meeting we would first gather in a classroom, then would “meet up” with other students or individuals across the country. I would have pre-arranged skyped chats with various schools or pre-recorded videos that schools created for us or even conversations with some of my personal contacts who would FaceTime us at a specific location. For example, we had the Georgia DNR FaceTime us at the Tallulah Gorge State Park, we were able to see Niagara Fall partially frozen last year thanks to a State Park representative and we finished out last Spring on the San Diego Pier with a Friend of a friend who then shipped sea shells from the San Diego beach to all my members. My clubs members have been able to see snow, national parks, Pacific Ocean, as well as getting to meet a ton of students from all of the US.

As my students reach each state they receive a fitness Finder charm that shows significance to that particular state. For my students that continue all three years with the program will end 5<sup>th</sup> grade with a large amount of these charms. Many of my students can still name to you the state and what they represent. A few examples are: a red bull for the Chicago, a blue star for Texas, a heart for Arizona “known as the Valentine’s State”.

As a way to encourage our students to exercise with their parents, family members or teachers I designate certain days throughout the season as “Invite Parent Day” or “Invite a teacher Day”. As an incentive to our teachers I’m able to give out “Jeans Passes” to those teachers who participate in the invite day or those who just come out to walk with our students.

The program has been very successful and rewarding for our school. It brings a vast number of students, teachers and parents together. We are all able to enjoy the outdoors, the new friends we make all while getting exercise.