

Dear SSA Girls' Cross-County,

I hope this letter finds you safe and healthy as we manage this most extraordinary time. One of the best ways to stay healthy both physically and emotionally is by exercising. Fortunately for us, running is one of the safer options: we can get outside and maintain social distancing. I encourage all of you to go for a run around your neighborhood or in a local park, and to begin this endeavor sooner rather than later, to get ready for the upcoming season and also avoid injury.

Whether you are a returning runner or new to the team, you can best prepare for the upcoming season by running for 30 – 45 minutes every other day to start. Choosing early morning or later in the day is optimal to avoid the heat which has been typical of these past few weeks. You should always stretch and warm up before starting your run, recalling the dynamic or static stretches we employed last season, or finding ideas on the internet. Pushups and ab work (planks, anyone?!) are always encouraged as well.

If you are new to the team, first of all, THANK YOU for considering joining us. We pride ourselves in welcoming any and all girls into our program: if you can walk, you can run, is my motto. My coaching experience has taught me that everyone, regardless of athletic skill or talent, has something to offer this team, and we are happy to have you. Legions of past SSA girls' cross country athletes began their athletic journey, their personal running journey, through this program, and have since reported to me their experiences in various races, half and full marathons across the country! If you can walk, you can run, and if you are a student at Shady Side, you value hard work, sustained effort and enthusiasm towards a common goal. Welcome!

We hope to start pre-season practice AT SHADY SIDE ACADEMY SENIOR SCHOOL CAMPUS on Monday, August 17 at 9:30 a.m., and we will finish by 11:30 a.m. We will meet in front of Curry Gym, stretch, then run. We will keep to that schedule for the rest of that week and the beginning of the next, and then we will move practice to the afternoon starting on Wednesday the 26th. **If you are uncomfortable or unsure about meeting in person for practice, I completely understand and support your decision to continue daily workouts at your home. Feel free to communicate this to me via email.**

Remember, you must turn in a completed health form to participate in preseason workouts, so please make sure you take care of that sometime between now and August 17th. Download the forms from the school's Website, or call the Athletic Department to get the necessary forms.

We also will be following daily screening and virus mitigation procedures before practice. Please check out the information from the Athletic Department detailing the testing and screening procedures for preseason. Changes to this current preseason plan, should that be necessary, will be communicated to you through the SSA athletic department.

So stay safe this summer, go out for a run, read a good book, and I will see you on August 17th!

Sincerely, Susan B. Whitney, Head Coach, Girls' Cross Country,
swhitney@shadysideacademy.org