

Achilles International

New York, NY

Achilles Kids

Achilles Kids is in the midst of a very busy year, with great progress being made in both our school and weekend workouts. Our school program helps 4,000 children in 150 schools with disabilities to run, walk, and roll a “virtual marathon” in their adaptive physical education classes. We have schools in Princeton, New Jersey, Roanoke, Virginia, San Diego, California, Providence, Rhode Island, and Salt Lake City, Utah in addition to our core concentration in New York. Children who completed 26.2 miles receive a free pair of sneakers. In 2011, 2,000 children accomplished this incredible goal!

We also held year-round weekend workouts for children with disabilities – the majority of whom are on the spectrum – and their typically developing siblings. The weekend workouts are an important opportunity for children to exercise in a supportive, structured welcoming environment. Children do calisthenics, run laps, and play running based games. Each of the workouts has a fun theme that makes children excited to exercise. In addition to increasing their endurance and stamina, children learn important lessons such as waiting their turn, following directions, focusing on a task, and cheering for their teammates.

Both the school and weekend programs serve a population that is overwhelmingly made up of minority children from low-income families.

Achilles Kids met additional goals laid forth in our proposal including:

- Offer complementary lesson plans in subjects including math, geography and nutrition
- Host races including the annual Hope & Possibility that include children with and without disabilities
- Increase comfort of being in a mainstream environment by sponsoring children in New York

Road Runners Pee-Wee races each year

- Achilles provides parents and teachers with nutritional lesson plans prepared by a licensed dietitian and nutritionist presented in kid friendly manner
- Improve concentration, participation and enthusiasm for school (as measured by annual teacher surveys)
- Increase speed, mobility and endurance, as measured by laps/miles completed (compared to previous years)
- Children with disabilities who began in Achilles Kids school or weekend program graduate to ultimately competing in actual marathons (have included ING NYC, Miami, and Marine Corps)
- Increase confidence and self-esteem of children with disabilities through mentor relationships (as measured by children and parent testimonials; gathered annually)

We were also excited to work with Autism Speaks on their Health and Fitness Portal. We have shared this site with our families as a resource for their continuing awareness of health, fitness, and nutrition.

Funds from Autism Speaks enabled us to serve 1,674 children on the autism spectrum. Funds were used to cover the cost of sneakers for children on the spectrum who completed the virtual marathon.