Press Release

Wednesday 5 September 2018

MarathonKids Ireland Fingal programme launched by International Track Athlete David Gillick

The MarathonKids Ireland programme was launched by Olympian and two-time European 400m champion David Gillick in St Molaga’s National School, Balbriggan.
This is the fourth year that MarathonKids Ireland has been implemented by Fingal County Council's Sports Office, the first Irish local authority to introduce the programme to fifth and sixth class primary school students.

MarathonKids encourages children to embrace a healthy and active lifestyle through training sessions and nutritional education.

This year, 35 Fingal Schools and over 2,500 students will complete 25.2 miles over eight weeks. Students will train four times a week before running the final mile as a group at an organised event in November, allowing them to complete the marathon distance of 26.2 miles.

This year sees David Gillick acting as MarathonKids Ireland Ambassador as well as South Dublin County Council taking part again.

During the launch, students of St Molaga’s NS began their first training session of the programme. The students are also supplied with a workbook, which highlights the benefits of sport and is used as both a training guide and learning tool for in classroom use.

Neil Kennedy of MarathonKids Ireland and Fingal County Council Senior Sports Officer Niall McGuirk developed the programme which took place for the first time in 2015 and saw 800 students take part.

Neil was inspired to introduce the programme to Ireland after witnessing it being implemented in America. He said: “I was blown away by the success of the programme and I knew it would be something that could work in any school in the country. I’m delighted that South Dublin County Council has embraced it and
to have someone of the stature of David Gillick on board will only help to highlight the benefits of getting our young people more active and involved in physical activity.”

Fingal's Senior Sports Officer Niall McGuirk said: “The MarathonKids programme has had great success in the last three years and we are delighted to see a further increase in the numbers of schools taking part. Fingal County Council’s Sports Office works extensively with community groups and schools across the county and is committed to educating young people through inclusive, enjoyable and accessible health and fitness initiatives.”

Teachers are also delighted to implement the programme in schools. Principal of St. Molaga's Pauline Costello said:  We have been engaged with the Marathon Kids programme from the start and the children are very enthusiastic about the programme. It has prompted an increase in running in the whole school and all classes engage in running activity every day on the all-weather pitch.”

Deputy Mayor of Fingal, Cllr Grainne Maguire also attended the event. She said: “The MarathonKids programme is an inclusive and enjoyable means of encouraging children to embrace healthier lifestyles. Regardless of ability, each student's health and well-being will improve through taking part in this programme. I'm particularly happy to attend the launch here in St Molaga’s school in Balbriggan and look forward to seeing everyone's progress.”

Chief Executive of Fingal County Council, Paul Reid said: “Fingal has the youngest population in Ireland so initiatives such as MarathonKids are essential investments into their future health and well-being. I would like to also
commend Fingal’s Sports Office for their consistent leadership and engagement with the communities and schools across the county.”

ENDS

For media queries, please contact press@fingal.ie

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Photo caption: MarathonKids participant Sean Creamer, David Gillick, Deputy Mayor of Fingal, Cllr Grainne Maguire and MarathonKids participant Shane Clarke.