

## Fort Worth Star-Telegram (TX)

August 2, 2007  
**Section:** Sports  
**Edition:** Tarrant  
**Page:** D2

### Cowtown Marathon has new running mate

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*Special to the Star-Telegram*

**Steve Looney** has held many titles in his day — judo instructor, masseuse and boxing cornerman — but if all goes according to plan, his newest title will read race director. Looney is starting the Fort Worth Marathon, scheduled for Nov. 11 at the Botanical Gardens. Although the Cowtown Marathon, scheduled in February, has been run for 30 years, Looney sees plenty of room for one more.

"Some people have said it's a bad idea, that there's already a marathon in Fort Worth," Looney said. "We've got a big plan, and we hope to get it off the ground over the next two years."

Looney is still securing sponsorships, but plans to give a car to the winner. The event will feature a full and a half-marathon, without a 5K or 10K. While the Fort Worth Marathon likely won't cater to kids, Looney came up with the marathon idea as part of his plan to build youth running in Tarrant County.

He said the idea came to him when he saw three Texas cities, Fort Worth included, on a list of the United States' fattest. Looney sees targeting childhood obesity as the best preventive measure. The Fort Worth Marathon is just part of Looney's plan.

"The big reason we started doing this was the obesity problem," Looney said. "Fort Worth is No. 5 in the country in obesity, and it all starts with kids. It's going to cost us a lot later if we don't get the kids off the couch and teach them to run."

Looney also hopes to spread his running program, "Run Like a Cheetah," to local schools. The program helps develop after-school running programs for kids.

The key to Looney's afterschool program is his association with world-class athletes, whom he met through his work with TCU and his company, Southwest Sports Massage. His associates include athletes such as Eliud Njubi, who set five school records as a distance runner at TCU. Looney plans to send Njubi and other athletes to schools to bring insight and encouragement to the kids. So far, the reaction from young runners has been positive.

"[The kids] find it pretty interesting because they wonder how you can run 2 to 3 miles to school," Njubi said. "It's introducing them to the culture of, 'If I have to go 3 miles, what is the benefit of running, even if it's at a slow pace?'"

"It's a cumulative thing. If you start exercising in school, when you get to 50, 60 years old, you're still healthy."

With the help of these athletes, Looney hopes kids will take to the lessons and become more active.

While the marathon and after-school programs are just getting started, Looney said he'll approach the projects just like a marathon — one step at a time.

Texas marathon calendar

The Fort Worth Marathon is the newest kid on the running block, but is just one of a handful of marathons in Texas. Here's a look at where it fits on the running calendar: (for 2007)

Oct. 28

Miracle Match Marathon (Waco)

Nov. 11 (2007) Nov. 9 (2008)

Fort Worth Marathon

San Antonio Marathon

Dec. 8

Sunmart Endurance Run (Huntsville)

50 mile and 50K

Dec. 9

White Rock Marathon (Dallas)

Jan. 1, 2008  
Texas Marathon (Kingwood)  
Jan. 13, 2008  
Houston Marathon  
Feb. 17, 2008  
Austin Marathon  
Feb. 23, 2008  
Cowtown Marathon  
March 4, 2008  
El Paso Marathon  
April 6, 2008  
Big D Texas Marathon (Dallas)

Steve Looney is encouraging kids to get off the couch and join his running program, "Run Like a Cheetah."