

## Homeschool Mom Finally Joins Children in Completing Presidential Fitness Award!

by Phyllis Paladin

[This article first appeared in Issue 61 (Winter 1997-1998) of the *PA Homeschoolers* newsletter.]

My feet hurt, my legs hurt and I began to realize what was ahead of me. I groaned as I thought about the four more 10 mile walks and the (gasp) 15 mile walk that I had committed myself to complete over the next four months. This was the third Presidential Sports Award I had begun with my children. They had each completed three. I had completed none. I had promised them, and more importantly myself, that I would make completing the program a priority this time and that we would do it together. I had set ambitious goals for myself and I was committed to do everything I could to reach them. I was stuck.

The days of walking led to weeks. The weeks soon turned to months and we were suddenly at the end of August and I really did it!. Four of us finished the Endurance Walking Award: my daughters Abigail (14) and Elizabeth (9), homeschool friend Rebecca Jackson (14), and me!

Most of you are familiar with the Presidential Fitness Program. You know that there are sixty-eight categories from which to choose. So why did I choose Endurance Walking? I felt this program would be perfect for a family of different ages and ability levels. I was right. The Endurance Walking award requires lots of walking but has no time limit or minimum pace required, unlike the Fitness Walking award which we had started together last year, and not completed. Even my youngest daughter, who was nine, could walk 15 miles if permitted to set her own pace. In addition to the long walks, three 1 hour training walks are required each week, but there is no required mileage that must be covered in those walks. A distance of 225 miles must be covered during the course of the entire program. That total was very easy to reach once we started adding up our training and endurance walks. In fact, we exceeded it.

By late August, when we completed the program, I was finding that my legs no longer hurt, my back no longer hurt and 10 miles really didn't seem that far.

Now we have our certificates to put into the portfolios and a patch with a "family fitness" strip to add to our "fitness banners" hanging in each child's bedroom. Beyond these tangible rewards we have a treasure of rich memories of all that we shared during the last four months. We played silly word games while walking, laughed together and even learned how to encourage each other when tears began forming in discouraged walkers' eyes who felt they just couldn't go another step. We saw some breathtaking beauty as we walked along routes and trails in our own neighborhood and in area state parks. I'll never forget coming upon three deer feeding early one morning as we arrived to walk in Penn Hills Park. We all have the satisfaction of knowing that we set out to accomplish a challenging task and we did it. Perhaps the highest endorsement came from my daughter Elizabeth who

walked through the room as I was working on this piece and said, "I'd like to do the Endurance Walking program again." i□£