



“ I’d recommend Parkrun to anybody, I think it’s fantastic. ”

The family that runs together...

enjoys healthy exercise, improved fitness levels and a great feeling when previous personal bests are bettered.

“It’s just really nice that we’ve got something that we can all do together,” is how Kenley mother-of-three, Alex Parris, sums up the Parkrun experience.

Alex, husband Justin, and their three daughters – keen club runner Fran, reluctant Gabriella and enthusiastic Katrina – are to be found each Saturday morning on Roundshaw Downs, off Purley Way, taking part in this family-friendly 5km run.

Alex said that they’re usually among up to 120 runners who turn out, fair weather or foul, for what is essentially a great way to get some regular exercise.

“We started with the Banstead Parkrun, in the summer of 2008, and we’ve been with the Roundshaw Downs group for about 18 months,” said Alex.

“There’s always a lovely friendly atmosphere and everybody helps and

encourages you, even if, like me, you’re sometimes the last to get round.”

Being last to get round is something that doesn’t often happen to Fran, 15. Indeed, she recently been qualified to represent Surrey.

She said: “It’s great for training. I go to run my guts out, but that’s not really the point of Parkrun.

“Most people do it for fun, and that’s the real reason for it.”

Katrina, now 11, had her first real run at a Parkrun meet, when she was nine, and looks forward to the weekly event. Like her mum, she enjoys the sense of camaraderie among the runners.

She said: “I was struggling one week and a man slowed down to encourage me. He ran with me for a bit then went off ahead, but I caught him up

and ended up beating him to the finish.”

Unlike her sisters, Gabriella, 13, is not quite so keen to leave the comfort of her duvet on a winter’s Saturday morning, though she has gone along on the odd occasion. She said: “I think it’s good to do – if you do it! Every week I say I’ll go, but I usually don’t make it.”

As our photos show, however, she was present when *Your Croydon’s* photographer turned up.

Alex added: “I’d recommend Parkrun to anybody, I think it’s fantastic.

“It doesn’t matter what age you are, or your level of ability. You can go along, join in and not worry about how fast you can run.

“It’s not a race, it’s all about gradually improving your fitness and the time you can complete the five kilometres – it’s a great

feeling when you record a new personal best.”

Parkrun is staged every Saturday morning at 9am, over a 2.5km course which runners cover twice, though some, in their early days, go round just the once.

It’s a great event for:

- boys and girls who like running;
- women preparing for the 5K Race For Life events;
- beginners and intermediate runners who want to enjoy the support of other runners in a non-competitive environment;
- men and women wanting to improve their 5K or cross country times;
- half-marathon and marathon runners who want a weekly timed speed training session;
- all runners entering charity and other races who want to get used to running against the clock in a group.

Mick Turner, joint race director, said: “It’s a really relaxed event that attracts amateur runners who enjoy a timed 5km run in safe surroundings on a well-marshalled route, and anybody can join in.”

To give Parkrun a go, simply register at www.parkrun.org.uk/register and then turn up by 8.45 for the 9am start.

Fast runners can finish the run in less than 20 minutes, but most people take between 20 and 40 minutes to complete the distance.

By 10am the run is done – and you’ll be fired up for your weekend with a decent 5km run under your belt.

For more information about Parkrun, visit www.parkrun.org.uk/roundshaw or email Mick and Nicola at roundshawdirector@parkrun.com



“

It doesn’t matter what age you are, or your level of ability. You can go along, join in and not worry about how fast you can run.

”



Jubilant: The Parris get another Parkrun under their belts – Fran, Alex, Justin, Katrina and Gabriella