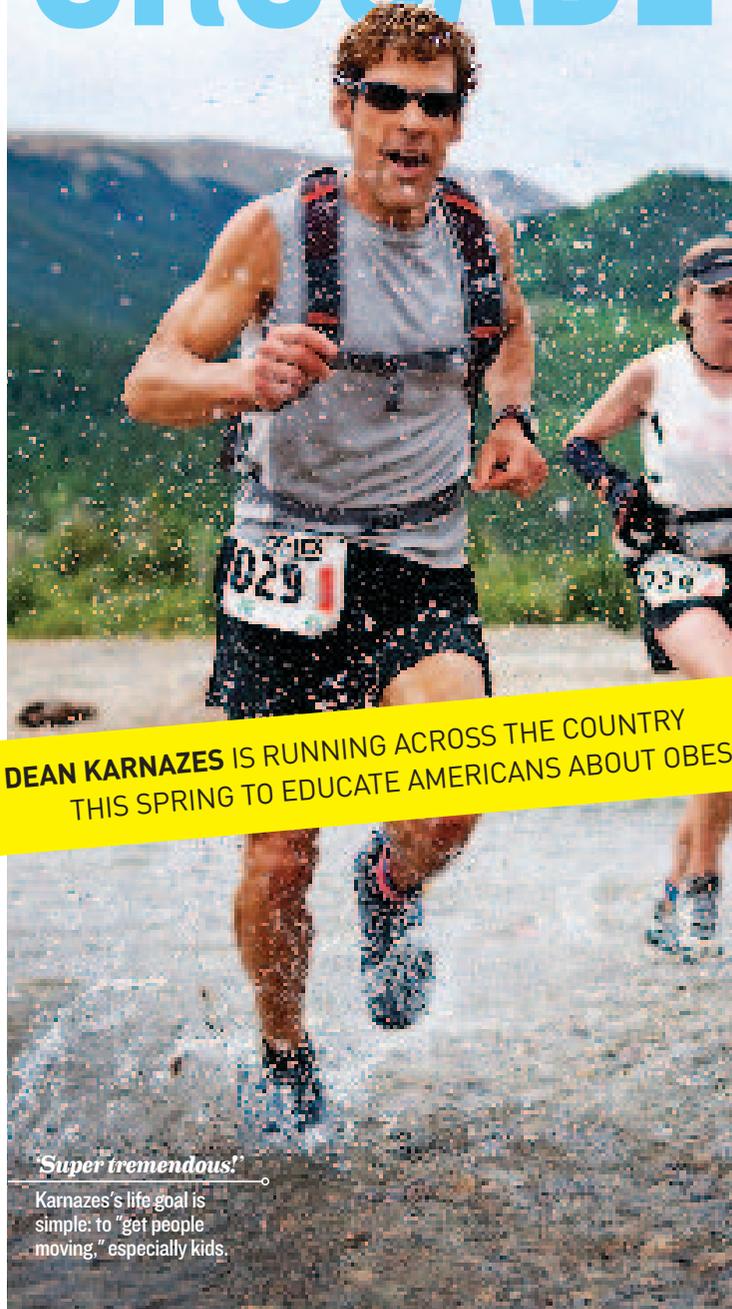


Coast-to-Coast**CRUSADE**

IN 2007 ULTRA-RUNNER Dean Karnazes was giving a talk at a junior high school in the South when nature called. He headed for the restroom, where he was met by a startling sight: a bucket full of used needles. “I thought, What is that doing in here?” Karnazes recalls. “So I asked the teacher, and she said, ‘A lot of kids here are insulin-dependent diabetics because of their weight.’ I couldn’t believe it. It was so sad.”

For Karnazes, the best-selling author of three books—his fourth, *Run! 26.2 Stories of Blisters and Bliss*, hits shelves March 1—moments like those have shaped his life’s mission: to promote better health for all Americans. In 2006 he ran 50 marathons in 50 states in 50 days, and two years later he logged 211 miles over 48 hours on a New York City treadmill—more than eight straight marathons in one room. His latest quest may be his most ambitious yet, and not just because it involves 3,100 miles of running at a pace of 40 to 50 miles a day.

On Friday, Karnazes, 48, was scheduled to embark on a run

costs \$41 billion a year, and it’s estimated that one-third of American children—25 million—are overweight or obese.

“My whole idea is to really shake people up, to break through,” Karnazes says of his latest journey. “To do that, you can’t just run a 5K.”

HIS CRUSADE IS NOTHING if not personal. Nearly 20 years ago, Karnazes was plodding along in the San Francisco corporate world, a paunchy former athlete who lacked purpose. Then, in a story he’s recounted many times, he beat back a birthday tequila buzz by running 30 miles overnight in his boxers. Since then, Karnazes has won some of the world’s toughest footraces and attracted a global following with his book *Ultramarathon Man*.

Karnazes still races nearly every weekend—he’s the guy who shouts “Super tremendous!” when people ask him how he’s doing—but winning is no

longer his focus; “getting people moving” is.

“Parents come up to me all the time saying, ‘I’m worried about little Johnny—he’s not active, he doesn’t eat well, and he’s chubby. What can I do?’ And I have to give that parent a hard response,” says Karnazes, who is married to his high school sweetheart and has two kids of his own, 13 and 16. “Are you active? Do you eat well? Do you watch your weight?” This needs to start with the parents saying, “Obesity sucks.”

Karnazes, like his idol, the late

ULTRAMARATHON MAN **DEAN KARNAZES** IS RUNNING ACROSS THE COUNTRY THIS SPRING TO EDUCATE AMERICANS ABOUT OBESITY  BY DEVON O’NEIL

across America—starting at Disneyland and finishing in Manhattan—to be broadcast regularly for nearly three months on *Live! with Regis and Kelly*. He will stop at schools and health clubs along the way to speak about fighting what he calls “globesity”—a problem that has grown to tragic proportions, especially among children. In Karnazes’s home state of California alone, between health care and lost productivity, obesity

“Super tremendous!”

Karnazes’s life goal is simple: to “get people moving,” especially kids.



One step at a time

Karnazes running into an Illinois school in 2007 for a speech

Jack LaLanne, sets a singular example in his own life. He runs 340 days a year (averaging 15 miles a day); maintains 3.5% body fat on his 147-pound frame; and eats salads made with salmon, cayenne pepper, grapefruit, broccoli, and sugar-free yogurt—a lifestyle he doesn't necessarily advocate for others, despite his ambitions for Americans' health.

Karnazes has set up a foundation, Karno Kids (motto: "No child left inside"), which has gotten tens of thousands of kids up and running in races across the country. He's also a member of a California task force that helped make state school lunches healthier and that got junk food removed from school vending machines. "Dean doesn't have to cite statistics," says California schools superintendent Tom Torlakson. "He's much more credible just being himself."

After this year's cross-country trek, Karnazes has an even bigger goal queued up for 2012: to run a marathon in all 204 recognized countries. "Running makes us all human," he says. "It brings people together in a wonderful way."

P Get Karnazes's tips for a healthy life (even if you're not a marathon runner) at Parade.com/karnazes