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THE ORANGE COUNTY Register

ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

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The Orange County Register **ORANGE COUNTY/FROM PAGE 1**

Huntington Harbour man is on the run again to help kids

PEOPLE: Tom Jones is jogging from Oregon to Mexico to raise cash for abused, neglected and abandoned children.

By **GIL HOPENSTAND**
The Orange County Register

The first time was a trial run. Last year, Tom Jones ran the entire length of California, north to south, 15 miles a day.

His pavement pounding raised many eyebrows, and \$100,000 for children's charities.

So the champion kick boxer, personal trainer and avid runner from Huntington Harbour is doing it again, this time with a heftier goal and more sponsors.

"Last year, people were nine-tenths convinced I should have been in a mental institute. Now they can see the vision more clearly," said Jones, 35.

Jones will be honored before tonight's Angels home game at Edison International Field of Anaheim, then fly to the Oregon border to start running Tuesday. He hopes to reach the Mexican border by late July.

His goal is to collect \$250,000 for children who are abused, neglected, abandoned, or angry enough to become violent. Even before he takes his first steps, corporations already have donated \$100,000.

At speaking engagements throughout the state, Jones will recall suffering physical and mental abuse from his father, taking refuge at age 8 in the Ma-

sonic Home for Children in Colton, and depending on alcohol and drugs for strength. He will tell of the goodness he later found in strangers, and in God.

Says Jones' wife, Brandi: "He's the 1 percent of people with his background who made it. He's a role model."

And Jones will urge teachers and parents to listen to children, to spot troubled behavior early.

"I remember chirping last year about violence from youth. This year, after Columbine, people are starting to pay attention, more willing to listen," Jones said. "I tell people, 'Your child is either a target or a shooter.'"

Between talks, Jones will run 20 miles a day toward Mexico. He will again brave hilly terrain, wet weather and the occasional angry farm dog.

A new 38-foot motor home will provide a bed, kitchen and shower for Jones and his pace car driver.

Meals will consist of foods high in protein and carbohydrates. No fats, no dairy products. Jones drinks two gallons of water a day.

Back home, Brandi Jones will take donations, care for the couple's four cats and watch her husband's progress through a live Internet camera.

Next year, Jones wants to run the width of the nation, from west to east. He hopes to break a Guinness Book record.

For donation information, call (888) 998-KIDS, or visit www.run4kids.org.



KENNETH STEINHARDT/For The Orange County Register

RUNNER WITH A CAUSE: Tom Jones of Huntington Harbour is running the entire length of the state — again — to raise money.