Battle of the bands | Fit trackers amp up exercise routines

By | Mary Katherine Nix & Whitney Webb

printing down the field with her Harrow field hockey stick, Tilley Neuhoff ['16] notes the buzz on her left wrist. She stops at the 50-yard line, a smile creeps across her face. She did it: her Fitbit recorded the 10,000th step, her daily goal.

The Fitbit fitness bands are not the only product that tracks physical activity. This fitness device craze began with the creation of the Nike+ iPod sensor by Apple and Nike in 2006.

Brands like Jawbone, Nike, Garmin and even Apple have all come out with their own activity trackers. According to a survey of 98 students, Sept. 18, 42.3 percent of the student body wears or has worn a fitness tracker to measure daily activity. These products offer a lot of the same features, but the Fitbit remains the most popular.

In the second quarter of 2015, Fitbit sold 4.5 million fitness trackers. This wearable technology indus-

try is expected to grow from "\$8.6 billion in 2012 to almost \$30 billion by 2018," according to leading business analysis firm IHS.

The Fitbit Company launched in San Francisco in 2007 by James Park and Eric Friedman, who found a way to connect wireless technology to the fitness process. Each of their Fitbit devices, even the basic models, tracks steps, calories and distance traveled, while more advanced ones calculate heart rates, record floors climbed and analyze sleep patterns.

Although her Fitbit band is one of the most simple models, Neuhoff appreciates its ability to motivate her and become more aware of her activity.

"I use the Fitbit Flex mainly to track calories," Neuhoff said. "It

definitely makes me more conscious about what I'm eating and encourages me to get active."

Most workout devices, including the Fitbit, have an app for smart phones that stores all the data from the band or clip. This Fitbit app is available to sync through the Apple Store, Windows Store and Google Play to over 150 types of mobile phones.

Sydney Helbing ['17] used her Fitbit Flex this

summer to improve her level of conditioning prior to field hockey season.

"I had to run to get my fitness in before field hockey," Helbing said. "I had heard that the Fitbit was a good tracker and would help me get in shape for the season so I got it. I can go and run around the neighborhood and it will tell me how far I've gone."

Although Helbing mainly uses it for measuring her distance, the Fitbit performs other useful features that make it appealing to those who want to improve overall physical fitness. But to get the most out of these devices, the user has to sync the device to a smart phone or computer to make use of its analytics because the band is just a monitor.

"The only thing that the band does is light up, and every dot means 20 percent of your daily goal," Helbing said. "My daily goal is 5,000, but in the summer it is about 15,000."

> Fitness trackers do have some drawbacks, though. Although users can input their calories eaten into the apps, they cannot accurately measure the amount of food eaten. It merely estimates the amount by the general food log entries installed in the app. Also, since most of the fitness trackers belong on the wrist, they cannot accurately measure activity that don't involve much arm activity like ellipticals and cycling machines.

> Fitbits come in two basic forms: a clip or a wristwatch.

> Clip models, including "the Zip", start as inexpensively as \$59.95. "The Surge" which is the most advanced of the Fitbits, costs \$249.95, with added features such as, continuous heart rate, multi-sport, text notifications, music control and

GPS tracking. Wrist Fitbits are also customizable.

Interchangeable bands come in different materials, colors, patterns, shapes, and designs so people can conceal their Fitbit or flaunt it. Designers like Tory Burch have even hopped on this trend providing style and personalization for wearers.

"My Fitbit Flex has the Tory Burch logo all over it, which enables me to wear it," Neuhoff said. "It's light-



Womens basketball coach Erika Hall uses an Apple watch as a constant reminder to stay active.

"You set goals whenever you first purchase your watch, and depending on your weight and your height, it will set a natural goal for you that you can increase," Hall said. "It wants you to stand for so many hours out of the day and you have to get at least 30 minutes of exercise or more and things like that. So if I'm sitting watching TV, it will buzz and tell me it's time to stand up and move around for one or two minutes."

Head of the physical education program Mike Schneider believes having a fitness tracker motivates people to workout and keep up with fitness goals.

"Having anything that allows you to track what you've done, whether it's a Fitbit or pedometer, you're more apt to succeed at that goal," Schneider said.

Fit talk

Sydney Helbing ['17] taps her Fitbit mid-practice to check how close she is to her daily goal of 5,000 steps. "During the school year, it's hard to get a lot," Helbing said. "But, usually I meet my goal everyday." MICHAEL PATTERSON staff photographer

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-Mike Schneider *Wellness Department* chair