Girls on the Run

Greater Detroit Coaches Survival Guide

Inspiring Girls to be Healthy and Confident

Spring 2014
What in this Binder??
This is a resource for you to use during the season!

Roster

Coaches Training Schedule

Letter from the Council Director

Girls on the Run Schedule

Gils on Track schedule

Pre-season phone calls

Community Service Projects

Season Celebration Awards

Planning a Mock 5K

Letter to parents

Healthy Snack Ideas

Getting your groups attention

Fun icebreakers

Bin supplies

Coach Planner

5 reasons to LOVE Girls on the Run

Coaches job description

Late Guardian/Absentee Policy

Transportation Policy
Girls on the Run of Greater Detroit
Spring 2014 Coaches Training
Feb 22 or Mar 1

10am Welcome

10:10am Meet Molly (Her Story) Video

10:25am Intro to Girls on the Run
   GOTR video
   How “it” works
   “The Girl Box”

10:45am NoBLE talk on Bullies
   Bullying Live Empowered (NoBLE) is a Beaumont Children's Hospital program providing integrated education, guidance
   and support for bullied children and families affected by bullying

11:15am Coaching 101
   What to expect from…
   Survival guide and other resources for you
   Meet your Liaison (Policy and Procedures)

12pm Lunch (We will provide, however, if you have special dietary concerns please feel free to bring your own)

12:30pm Girls on the Run/Girls on Track Curriculum– BREAKOUT, 30 minutes ea.
   Lesson 4
   Physical Activity and Snack Time
   Empathy Experience

2pm Beaumont Nutritionist talk on nutrition in youth
   discuss the benefits of exercise, why nutrition is important, the different macronutrients, hydration, what to eat
   before working out, and recipe ideas.

2:30pm Important Information– Spring 2014
   Season Logistics and 5K Details
   Community Service projects

3pm What’s in my bin?
   How to get your bins/ signing out bins

Follow up to training / Homework
   Optional session– Group management
   Icebreakers / First Day Lessons
   Getting your groups attention/ Energy Awards
   Effective Processing

Training evaluation

**Please Dress Comfortably**
Dear Coaches,

First off I want to thank you for your dedication to the Girls on the Run of Greater Detroit. This program would not be so successful without the dedication and support from volunteers as yourself. I greatly appreciate the time that you are giving to the Girls on the Run program and to the young women in your community. Girls on the Run is a very powerful program and I hope that it has the same lifelong, positive effects on you that it has on the girls that participate.

Being a coach will be one of the most rewarding, uplifting, and challenging experiences you will face. As a coach you will be guiding the girls through a curriculum that has topics that are not always easy to discuss. Just remember that even if the girls may not “get it” now, they will remember some of the lessons that you have taught them in the future. Maybe it will be next week when they get really mad at their big sister and remember their breathing techniques, or maybe it will be high school when they are faced with peer pressure. I assure you, your message will be remembered.

I have created this booklet for you to use as a resource. Inside your survival packet includes overview of lessons, healthy snack ideas, tips for managing your group, and even good ideas for keeping in touch with parents. Do not feel that you must use everything in this book, it is more as a reference for you to make your time as a coach more enjoyable. Also, please keep notes so that we can improve this booklet for future coaches. There will be challenging times this season, but please remember that you have many resources to turn to including access to your GOTR community liaison, your council director, other coaches in the area, Facebook, and email. Please do not hesitate to contact someone if you are having any frustrations. We are here to help!

Happy Coaching,

Jackie

Jacqueline H. Kippen
Council Director
Girls on the Run of Greater Detroit
YMCA of Metropolitan Detroit
## Spring 2014

### Girls on the Run Schedule—Curriculum I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week of</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 10</td>
<td>Lesson 1: Getting to know each other</td>
<td>Lesson 2: Plugging into Girls on the Run Cord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 17</td>
<td>Lesson 3: Choosing to be a Girl on the Run</td>
<td>Lesson 4: Positive Self-Talk and Why I Choose it!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 24</td>
<td>Lesson 5: Fueling out Healthy Pace</td>
<td>Lesson 6: Being Emotional is Healthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 30</td>
<td>Lesson 7: Celebrating Gratitude</td>
<td>Lesson 8: Centering-The importance of slowing down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 7</td>
<td>Lesson 9: Valuing what's Really Important</td>
<td>Lesson 10: Learning about Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 14</td>
<td>Lesson 11: Standing up to Peer Pressure</td>
<td>Lesson 12: Standing up for Myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 21</td>
<td><strong>Spring Break, No practice</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 28th</td>
<td>Lesson 13: Gossiping Hurts Everyone</td>
<td>Lesson 14: Beware of Bullies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 5</td>
<td>Lesson 15: It’s OK to Choose our Friends</td>
<td>Lesson 16: Practicing our 5K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 12</td>
<td>Lesson 18: Turning into a New Message</td>
<td>Lesson 19: Learning about community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>May 18!!</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 19</td>
<td>Lesson 20: Designing our Community Impact Project</td>
<td>Lesson 21: Using our Power: Implementing a community impact project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week of</td>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td>Day 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 10</td>
<td>Lesson 1: Getting to know each other</td>
<td>Lesson 2: Understanding the Girlbox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 17</td>
<td>Lesson 3: Learning to Deal: Minimizing Daily Stress</td>
<td>Lesson 4: It’s All About Balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 31</td>
<td>Lesson 5: Nutrition and Healthy Eating</td>
<td>Lesson 6: Empowered Bodies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 7</td>
<td>Lesson 7: Emotional Health: All Filled Up!</td>
<td>Lesson 9: Gratitude: Celebrate our Bodies our Minds and our Spirits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 14</td>
<td>Lesson 10: Conflict Resolution and Standing up For Myself</td>
<td>Lesson 11: Collaborative Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 21</td>
<td>Lesson 12: Peer Pressure/Alcohol, Tobacco, and other Drugs</td>
<td>Lesson 13: Gossiping and Bulling: Power vs. Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 28</td>
<td>Lesson 14: Cruising and using the internet</td>
<td>Lesson 15: Romantic Relationships/Dating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 5</td>
<td>Lesson 17: Turning into a New Message</td>
<td>Lesson 19: Celebrating and Honoring our living planet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 12</td>
<td>Lesson 20: Passing the Baton: How we serve as empowered role models to other Girls</td>
<td>Lesson 21: Community Service Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 18</td>
<td>Lesson 22: Community Service Project</td>
<td>Lesson 23: Girl-Bonds: a Lifetime of Friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 19</td>
<td>Lesson 23: Community Service Project</td>
<td>Lesson 24: Girl-Bonds: a Lifetime of Friendship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pre-Season Phone Call Checklist

Reaching out to parents before the first practice can be very helpful, below is a list to help you to reach out to parents and some suggested items to cover!

* Introduce yourself
* Give them your contact information
* Review Meeting days and times
* Review session start, end dates, and 5K event date
* Review drop off and pick up location
  * This is a great time to review the late and absentee policy!
* Remind parents that their daughter should wear comfortable clothing and running shoes.
  * Remind them we will be outside whenever possible except for sever storms!
* Bring a full bottle of water
* Be sure to let parents know we will be providing snacks and discuss any food allergies
* Tell parents that on the first day we will be providing them with a parent guide which is an overview of each lesson so they will be able to follow along and reinforce discussions at home
* Allow time for any questions they may have
Community Service Ideas

The Community Service Project is a core piece of the Girls on the Run Curriculum. Below are few ideas for you and your team. If you have questions or need help setting up a project talk with your YMCA Liaison or Jackie.

1. Craft Fair– Teams use their creativity to do crafts to sell at a fair at the school, money can be donated to a charity of their choice

2. Sending old running shoes to the less fortunate

3. Sending holiday cards or thank you cards to military overseas

4. School clean-up / Beautification

5. Community garden work

6. Skit for school regarding no bullying or other topics learned at GOTR

7. Healthy goodie bags and/or thank-you cards for teacher appreciation

8. Letters to the Local Government about particular issues

9. Make healthy lunch/meals and give to homeless shelters

10. Make planters for senior centers

11. Read to younger children at the library

12. Making holiday door decorations, goodie bags, or cards for local nursing home

13. Bake sale with proceeds benefiting charity of their choice

14. Goodie baskets for local police or fire

15. Talk with local church and write letters/send cards to the sick/homebound
Season Celebration Awards

Below are a few award ideas for energy awards or the end of season celebration

* All-Time Team Player
* Authentic
* Conquered her fear
* Cool Cat
* Determination Diva
* Dynamite Girl
* Extra Mile Spirit
* Full of Thought
* Gazelle
* Girl Heart
* Girl Power
* Sparkle
* Happy Face
* Helping Hand
* Hippy Chick
* Iron Girl
* Jump right in
* Mile Smile
* Miss Determination
* Out of the Box
* Pace Pusher
* Rocket Girl
* Runs like the Wind
* Spirit of Girls on the Run
* Streak of Lightening
* You Go Girl
* Girl with a Mission
* Hidden Talent
* Independent Spirit
* Non-Conformist
* Pebble in the Pond
* Strong Voice
* Strong Will
* You Did it!
Planning a Mock 5K

GOTR sites can host a Mock (practice) 5K around week 8 of the season. This gives the girls the opportunity to cover the entire 3.1 miles before the actual 5K and helps give them confidence to step up to the start line. Some teams make a community event of it and hold it on a weekend before the 5K, while others just run it during a practice. The choice is yours, call Jackie with any questions!

*Each site is individually responsible for planning this event, if they choose to. However, sites in the same town may coordinate one practice event together*

Here is how to plan a Mock 5K

1. Select a location. You can have it where you normally practice or off-site. Just make sure parents have plenty of notice to be able to provide transportation. If off-site make sure the location is available and reserved if necessary (let us know if you need help with this)
2. Plan to have a water station along the route so the girls can practice that part of a 5K. You can have a parent help with this or a co-coach.
3. Make the event as fun and exciting as possible! Make posters, create a finish line (crate paper works great!), bring noise makers, etc....the sky is the limit but please keep it budget friendly for your families.
4. Prepare the mock 5K awards, you can copy onto color paper, use bright markers, stickers, etc.
5. Communicate the event with parents, and let them know they can run as well!

Good Luck!
Dear Girls on the Run Families,

Welcome to Girls on the Run! We are very excited to be coaching your girls this Fall. Girls on the Run of Greater Detroit is an affiliate program of the YMCA of Metropolitan Detroit. Over the next 10 weeks, through the power of running, your daughter will be empowered with a greater sense of self awareness, a sense of achievement and a foundation in team building to help her to continue to be a strong and self-confident young women. Practices will be filled with interactive activities such as running, playing games, and discussing important issues such as the importance of positive body image and self-esteem, living a healthy lifestyle, and positive conflict resolution, all while training for a non-timed celebratory 5K event. Each coach has gone through a training session with the YMCA of Metropolitan Detroit. We will also have a CPR certified coach onsite at each practice. We look forward to having your daughter at practice and we are glad that you are a part of the Greater Detroit Family. Below is some important information for you to know for the upcoming season.

The first day of Girls on the Run is this _________________. We will meet twice per week for the next 10 weeks. Our designated meeting spot will be________________________. If you arrive late to practice please meet us________________________. Please plan to pick up your daughter at _____________________.

Practice Days:________________________

Practice times:________________________

Aftercare or Special arrangements: If your daughter is to go to aftercare or has permission to walk home, please let us know via e-mail or written note.

Communication: Coaches will generally communicate through email or written notes. We will keep you up to date on what we’re doing in practices, as well as give you important information on our 5K event on November 17th! E-zines will be available on the GOTR website, there will be new ones every 2 weeks starting the week of Sep 13th.

Snacks: GOTRGD will provide a healthy snack at each practice. Please notify us if you daughter has any sever food allergies.

Running Shoes and Water bottle: Please send your daughter with running shoes and a water bottle from home. Wear comfortable clothes on practice days and be sure to dress for the weather.

Positive attitude– coming to practice with a positive “CAN DO” attitude! Everyone is valued at Girls on the Run, whether they run really fast or not!

Important Dates:

March 10th: 5K registration opens for families online (www.gotrdetroit.org)

April 17th: Last day to be guaranteed a 5K shirt

May 18th: Celebratory 5K in Ferndale

Thank you,
Healthy snack List

Snack time can be a fun part of a practice, below are a few snack options you can choose from. You will have roughly $6.00 per practice to spend on snacks. Try to buy things on sale, in bulk, or in season. Creativity can go a long way! Call us with concerns!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Healthy Snack</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 1</td>
<td>* Bananas (you can cut them in half if needed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 2</td>
<td>* apples and baby oranges (these will last in the fridge if you can buy bulk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 3</td>
<td>* Raisins and yogurt tubes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 4</td>
<td>* Cherry tomatoes and string cheese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 5</td>
<td>* Carrot sticks and humus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 6</td>
<td>* Cheerios and grapes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 7</td>
<td>* Watermelon Slices (These are inexpensive in the spring but can get</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 8</td>
<td>* Whole grain tortilla chips and salsa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 9</td>
<td>* Banana bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 10</td>
<td>* Mini wheat bagels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 11</td>
<td>* Fruit salad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 12</td>
<td>* Crispy wheat crackers and cheddar squares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 13</td>
<td>* Dried apple rings and whole grain pretzel bites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 14</td>
<td>* Apple sauce and graham sticks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 15</td>
<td>* Crispy cheddars and fresh fruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 16</td>
<td>* Crispy wheats and yogurt tubes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 17</td>
<td>* Cut up strawberries (or bananas) and rice cakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 18</td>
<td>* Apple slices and cheddar squares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 19</td>
<td>* Saltines and fruit (strawberries, bananas, oranges...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson 20</td>
<td>* Special snack for last day of practice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Getting your groups attention

Sometimes it can be difficult to get your team attention because they are so excited to be talking with their new friends. Below are some helpful tips to making regrouping fun!

- Hand signals
  - Peace and Quiet (fingers make peace sign, index finger to lips making “shh” signal)
  - Clap a rhythm that the girls can follow
  - Say “Clap three time if you can hear me, clap four times if you can hear me…” start softly so only a few girls hear and start to clap until everyone joins in
  - Raise your hand (like in class)
  - Put 10 fingers up and start lowering them one by one, when you get down to the last finger, they should be circled up.

- Voice commands– use respondents with the girls, words that you can call out and they know to respond with another word that will mean to circle up, come to you, eetc. You can even let the girls come up with one on the first practice!
  - You say “Ago” they say “Ah-may” which means “I am speaking” and “I am listening”
  - “Peanut”…”Butter”
  - “Jelly”…”Donut”
  - “Ready or not”…”Here we come”
  - “Scooby Dooby Doo”…”where are you”
  - “Mama Mia”…”What a spicy meatball” (really funny is said in a heavy Italian accent!)
  - “Old McDonald had a farm”…”EIEIO”

- Other ideas
  - Use a whistle
  - Putting music on
  - Ring a bell
  - Honk a horn
Ice breakers

Many of the girls will not know each other, the first day of practice is a great time to incorporate some icebreakers into the lesson. Below are a few ideas to choose from.

**Warp speed**– Materials: ball or stuffed animal (any object that can be tossed around)

Girls will toss the ball to another team member while saying that persons name. That person will toss to another team member while saying that persons name a so forth. When the girls get all the way around they have to do it again in the same order. You can then make the game difficult by making them go faster, backwards, adding another ball, and so forth.

**Name switch**– Material: sticky name tags (Tape, Post-its, labels, name tags...)

Girls will write their name on their name tag. Girls will then go up to each other and introduce themselves with their name and tell the other person what their favorite movie, food, and color are. The girls then switch name tags, and go on to introduce themselves as whomevers name tag they have. Remember, girls can only share info 1 time! Girls should switch 3 times. At the circle up and introduce each other and see how good the girls memories are!

**Friend/Enemy**– materials: whistle (no running)

Girls circle up. Tell the girls to choose 1 person in the circle to be their “friend”. Now choose one person to be their “enemy” (its just for the game, they are not really an enemy). The object of the game is for each girls to keep their “Friend” between themselves and their “Enemy”. Let the girls walk around and try to do this. When you blow the whistle they must freeze (you can do this a few times). At the end of the game, see which girls ended up with their “Friend” between them and their “Enemy”! Make sure at the end to have the girls go up to their “Friend” and thank them, and have them go up to the “Enemy” and say “your really not my enemy” and give then a hug or high five!

**Nose jousting**– Materials: masking tape, labels in bin will work as well

Each girl will get a piece of tape they will roll it up loosely and stick it to the end of their nose. When the games starts the girls will nose joust each other one on one. Without using hands girls must touch noses and whoever ends up with both pieces of tape is the winner of that battle. The loser of the battle then becomes the winner ULTIMATE fan, and cheers them on as they continue to battle other girls (if a girls wins a battle, they also win all of their opponents fans as well!). The game continues until there is 1 winner (do not take the tape off during the game, the girls continue to battle with all of the tape they have won during that game). This game can get very loud and silly, but is a great way to bring the girls out of their comfort bubble.

**Rock Paper Scissor Olympics**– Materials: Hands

This game is exactly like the nose jousting except you play rock/paper/scissors instead. Winners accumulate fans. And the game continues until there is 1 ultimate champion!
What’s in my Bin?

**GOTR**

Below is a list of all the supplies you should have in your program bin. If you are missing anything please contact your local Coordinator or the Council Director. Please recycle your paper as much as possible, and return any supplies that you do not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supply</th>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name/Mailing labels</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange cones</td>
<td>1, 5, 6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whistle</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markers</td>
<td>1, 3, 6, 7, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 18, 20</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stickers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10 sheets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lap counters (pot holder loops, beads, pipe cleaner, coffee stirrers, popsicle sticks, hair ties)</td>
<td>2, 3, 4, 7, 9, 10, 14, 16</td>
<td>~300 (mix of all)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pencils</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pens</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>3, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 18, 20</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manila envelopes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>index cards</td>
<td>5, 15</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poster board(half sheet)</td>
<td>9, 12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toothpaste tube</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>balloons</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Sandwich bag full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazines— not in bin,</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small stuffed animal</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beach ball</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity Kit</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water bottle</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grown up guides</td>
<td>For parents</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First aid kit (Band-Aid’s, gauze, wet wipes/ hand sanitizer)</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaches Kit</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notebook for each girl</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What’s in my Bin?

*GOT*

Below is a list of all the supplies you should have in your program bin. If you are missing anything please contact your local coordinator or the Council Director.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supply</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Markers</td>
<td>15 (at least 3 red &amp; blue)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colored chalk</td>
<td>1 pack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sticky labels</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cones</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poster board</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gift wrap tissue paper</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small stone/marbles</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index cards</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown paper bags</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balloons</td>
<td>1 Pack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party noise makers</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yarn/string</td>
<td>1 roll long enough for 15 pieces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bag of beads</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jump ropes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disposable camera</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lap counters</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track baton</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green piece of paper</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beach ball</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posicle sticks</td>
<td>1 large bag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity Kit</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water bottles</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First aid kit (Band-Aid's, gauze, wet wipes/ hand sanitizer)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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<td>Coaches Kit</td>
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<td>Notebook for each girl</td>
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This is one of the 5Ks that I helped organize. You will see why my dad is dressed like that in the story! IT WAS FREEZING. (L-R Me, Papa Held, and my older sister)

Shawna Held, a native Washingtonian, is slowly learning that the rain excuse isn’t working in California, where she moved to attend graduate school in Women’s Studies. She hopes to one day be that fun and wacky Women’s Studies Professor you wish you had or be a director of a Girls on the Run program. When she isn’t writing papers she is running, or at least thinking about running, which totally counts.

In women’s studies, there is an inherent challenge in taking the theories from the thick pages of our texts and putting them into practice with real people. When this actually happens it is called praxis.

As someone who is allergic to complicated theories, I struggled for years to realize that I was practicing praxis while doing my two favorite things: running and empowering young women. My time with Girls on the Run has not only been my example of positive praxis, but my inspiration.

I have had the privilege to volunteer as a Girls on the Run (GOTR) coach both in Washington state and San Diego. My experiences have been widely different and exceptionally rewarding. If you do not know, Girls on the Run (GOTR) is a program for elementary school girls that empowers them through running. Coaches lead weekly sessions about everything from positive body image and nutrition to the negative impacts of bullying, and all of these lessons somehow involve running to pre-
pare for the season-ending 5K run. (For more information on GOTR, I highly suggest you check out their website, which explains their history much better than I can.)

While I cannot explain everything about GOTR, I can write about my own love of GOTR.

Below are five reasons why I love GOTR and why you should too:

1. Coaches

Each GOTR site (often an elementary school) has anywhere from 3-5 volunteer coaches that meet up once or twice a week to coach a GOTR team. The coaches I have worked with are up there on the upper echelons of my feminist heroes. Often these women are community leaders, teachers, businesswomen, or students, and they all RULE. I am convinced that I am the luckiest GOTR coach ever because I am constantly placed with women who often serve as mentors for not only the girls, but for me.

In particular, the coach I first worked with, now the director of a GOTR, is probably the person I most want to be. Besides being one of Bellingham’s fastest runners, she is the nicest person I have ever run across. (Not literally, since she runs a mile in half the time I could, but I digress.) The way that she talks to girls and the way that she makes them believe that they are special is without a doubt awe-inspiring.

I do not need a feminist theory to tell me how these coaches put theory into action. With every stride amongst the girls and word of encouragement, GOTR coaches are employing feminist actions daily: empowerment through encouragement, strength through listening and most all, learning through love.

I am constantly in awe of the way that my other coaches diffuse tense situations, increase encouragement, and find it in their hearts to give and give after their own long days at work and their own struggles.

If you have ever been a GOTR coach I admire you. Thank you.

2. Community/Volunteers

This past year, when one of my fellow coaches got sick, I got a personal phone call from GOTR, encouraging phone calls, flowers and cards all materialized in the matter of minutes. It was an honor to be a part of this quickly created and immensely supportive community.

Although I just talked about how valuable volunteer coaches are, the GOTR community includes much more than coaches. GOTR is nothing without volunteers. These volunteers for the 5K race range from running buddies, people handing out food, people who organized the 5k and all of the other various and very important volunteers. Running is not necessary to be a part of the GOTR community.

As you can see I’m probably the biggest fan of GOTR. So much so that it involves the whole family—my parents have helped steer hundreds of running girls away from the Canadian border for one 5K and came back with stories and smiles. At another 5K, my dad was a big hit at the Maui mile in 30-
degree Washington winter weather, handing out leis to girls and talking about how warm it was in Hawaii.

I have seen high schoolers, grandparents, people on crutches, and city officials all along the day of the 5k cheering on every runner like it was a marathon.

3. Money

You know how sometimes you pay for races and grumble throughout the race wondering what exactly your money went towards? After grumbling through multiple races, kicking myself for spending money on something not related to either food or school, I have become quite cynical about paying for races. GOTR has helped transform me from a Scrooge with running shorts to Richie Rich when it comes to paying for anything Girls on the Run related.

GOTR money goes directly to the girls. Look at their shoes. This year at my scholarship site, all of the girls received new shoes. For some of these girls, these shoes were the first pair of shoes that they have had that are not only new, but theirs. This sense of ownership is powerful and is a powerful reminder that money can sometimes buy happiness.

That being said, money from GOTR also goes towards scholarship sites, entire GOTR sites that participants only have to pay a minimum fee to participate. Scholarship sites are amazing as are the donors that help make it possible for girls to participate regardless of financial ability to pay.

4. You

I love GOTR. My experience as a coach and a running buddy for more than five seasons has transformed me. I came into GOTR wanting to make a difference in the lives of young girls, when instead the girls have made a difference in my life. Even while drowning in graduate school stress, my time coaching GOTR has been incredibly valuable.

In GOTR, I have learned that the socially just and empowering world I am fighting for is necessary. I have learned that eating disorders and body image have not just affected me, but continue to affect the incredible girls I have coached. I have learned that the girls are running from many things with reasons that I will never know, but at least I can point them in the right direction.

I cry at every final 5K race. I cry because I never know how to tell the girls how much they have inspired me. I cry because I am witnessing a massive celebration of girl empowerment in a world that continues to disempower girls daily. You can see girls start to believe in themselves every day at practice, but the 5k is a truly beautiful example of female empowerment.

I ran my first marathon with a GOTR shirt on, reliving the highlights of the season as I struggled past miles I never thought I could run. I continue to run marathons with new inspiration and new motivation from GOTR.

Maybe GOTR won’t transform you as much as it did for me, but it will inspire you. Don’t we all need a little bit of inspiration?

5. The Girls
Lastly, I cannot talk about Girls on the Run without talking about the girls. There is never a practice or a final race where I am not impressed or empowered to make positive change. I owe this all to the girls.

My first GOTR 5K, I ran with a quiet girl, who had started walking about a mile away from the finish line. As she passed the cheering volunteers, she started to pick up her pace and began running. I heard her talking to herself and as I caught up with her, I realized that with every step she was saying, “I can do it, I can do it.” And she did. I wonder if she thinks of that moment now when she thinks she cannot do something. I hope she realizes that she has done something before and she can do it again.

At the most recent 5K, I ran with a girl who was suffering from terrible asthma. She would walk to catch her breath and then would sprint forward wheezing, waiting for me to catch her. Near the finish line, she began to catch her breath and got into a stride that she sustained until they put a medal over her head. She had made it.

The girls are wonderful mix of personalities, cultures, and attitudes. Every practice was a new lesson in listening for me, and a new lesson in the power of young girls.

**Final Thoughts:**

While these are only samples of why I love Girls on the Run, I hope that it has brought up your own reasons to love young women’s empowerment. I hope you read this and remember that you too can be “voluntarily awesome” (the slogan on coaches t-shirts this season). Have I convinced you yet?

(In the spirit of full disclosure: I was an intern with Girls on the Run of Northwest Washington and assisted in the planning of two 5k’s during my time there. I have been an assistant coach for GOTR for 3 seasons, a Girls on Track coach for one season and a running buddy. Once I pay off my college loans I plan on bankrolling a Girls on the Run scholarship site or working for Girls on the Run, a combination of the two would be ideal. I love Girls on the Run – obviously.)
