



Girls on the Run (GOTR) is a non-profit 501-C3 with the mission of educating and preparing girls for a lifetime of self-respect and healthy living. Volunteer coaches lead 3rd-8th grade girls through a ten week program where they use fun running games and experiential activities to help girls learn about expressing themselves, making good choices, creating healthy habits and serving their community. The program culminates in a non-competitive 5K event which gives the girls a chance to shine and an overwhelming sense of accomplishment. The girls complete the program with a stronger sense of identity, a greater acceptance of themselves, a healthier body image and an understanding of what it means to be part of a team.

Girls on the Run of Southeastern Michigan (GOTRSEMI) is an affiliate of Girls on the Run International. Girls on the Run of Southeastern Michigan serves five counties – Washtenaw, Livingston, Monroe, Jackson and Lenawee. In our five county service area there are approximately 37,000 girls between the ages of 8 and 12 according to the 2006 US Census. Our long-term goal is to make Girls on the Run available to every 3rd - 8th grade girl in the five counties we serve.

Setting up a Girls on the Run Site

STEP 1:

Identify a site. Girls on the Run offers programs at schools, parks, YMCA's or similar venues. The program location is responsible for:

- Providing a volunteer "site liaison" - contact person at the site to coordinate with GOTR.
- Providing a safe place for running. This does not have to be a track. A field is fine. However, there would be a need to measure off part of the area for occasions when lessons require running a certain distance, e.g. 1 mile, 5k, etc.
- Providing an indoor location for times when there is inclement weather (preferably a gym, but an auditorium or classroom is sufficient)
- Determining how many teams (a team is 8 – 15 girls) you'd like to offer.
- Choosing two days a week for meeting. We meet for 90 minutes each day.
- Recruiting two volunteer coaches for every team of 8 – 15 girls.
- Arranging a time for a Girls on the Run® representative to visit your site and meet your administration and volunteer coaches.
- Attending a one hour Site Liaison Training where they will receive all the materials they need to advertise the program and register participants.
- Arranging an information meeting for girls and families prior to registration deadline to show our video (available on our website), answer questions and encourage registration.
- Distributing registration forms to all girls in age group (3rd –5th for Girls on the Run and 6th – 8th

- for Girls on Track®)
- Assisting in marketing the program in your community

STEP 2:

We require two coaches for each team of 8 – 15 girls. Most of our sites have more than one team.

All new coaches must attend a full day Girls on the Run training before the program begins. Our training is based on the well-developed and researched curriculum used successfully by all local and national GOTR programs.

At least one coach at each site must be CPR and first aid certified. Girls on the Run of Southeastern Michigan provides CPR and first aid training and certification for one coach per site.

Volunteer coaches are required to prepare for and supervise 90 minute lessons, twice a week, in a manner consistent with the GOTR philosophy and curricula. GOTR coaches are required to attend and support their team at the culminating New Balance Girls on the Run 5k event.

Families, teachers and administrators are welcome to attend the lessons and assist the coaches, offer encouragement, participate in games and run with the girls. Often families help with snack, planning the mock 5k, the community service project and end of season celebration.

STEP THREE:

Complete all paperwork. Every program site is provided with an application, recruitment flier, and registration forms. The program Site Liaison is responsible for:

- Signing and returning the application to the GOTRSEMI office
- Marketing the program to the community
- Distributing registration forms to the girls
- Collecting forms and fees
- Entering the participant information into the Girls on the Run database to generate team rosters
- Sending the forms and fees to GOTRSEMI office in the envelope provided

STEP FOUR:

Have a great season! Our program culminates with the New Balance Girls on the Run 5k event. We encourage as much site involvement in this event as possible. Families, teachers, administrators and community members welcome to come out and walk, run, and cheer the girls on!

Additional information:

Group Size

We prefer a minimum of 8 girls and limit each group to a maximum of 15 girls. The minimum is based upon both financial and curriculum considerations. Because much of our curriculum is related to team building and group dynamics, fewer than 8 girls may make it difficult to provide the experience we want to offer to the girls. More than fifteen girls make it difficult to establish the group rapport and the depth of community we are seeking in the 10 weeks we have together. If you choose to allow more than 15 girls register you will be required to separate them into multiple teams. Each "team" must have at least two coaches.

Timing and Length of Session

We have two seasons of Girls on the Run each year. Each season offers a different curriculum.

- Fall Session** usually begins mid - September and runs for 10 weeks. Each site meets twice a week for ninety minutes. To begin a session at your site in the fall, planning should be finalized no later than May 19th.
- Spring Session** usually begins in mid-March and runs for 10 weeks. Each site meets twice a week for ninety minutes. To begin a session at your site in the spring, planning should begin in the fall and should be finalized no later than November 18th.

Curriculum

Each curriculum (spring, fall and Girls on Track) covers 20 lessons. Each lesson follows a general pattern. As the girls arrive they are provided with a healthy snack and settle into a circle, the coach "checks in" with them, seeing how each is feeling, getting a feel for the group's dynamic for the day and introducing the topic of the lesson. This will include a "Getting On Board" activity.

Following the "Getting on Board" is a "Warm Up" game - perhaps a short relay or some other brief activity to warm up. The topic of the lesson is incorporated into the game. For instance, in one of the first lessons, the coach marks off a short running course. The girls stand at one spot and the coach calls out a "like statement" - "I like chocolate chip cookies," or "I like to play basketball." All those girls who agree with the statement run (walk, jog - they set their own paces) the course marked out by the coach. These statements continue, with contributions by the girls, until everyone has run a few times at least.

With their muscles warmed up a bit, the coach leads the girls through a brief stretching session. During that time, the girls and the coach "process" the topic. In this example, they might discuss how people can have different likes and dislikes and still be friends. Or how our likes and dislikes develop, etc.

The "Work Out" follows the warm up/stretch. This involves more actual running. The program starts with shorter periods of running and builds up as the coaches assess each girl's ability and pace. Eventually, the Work Out will build up to a "mock" 5k (3.1 mile run) on site, to give the girls the confidence helpful in participating in an actual 5k event (see below). The "Work Out" also involves the "topic of the day." For instance, in the session on positive attitude, each girl may be asked to make a positive statement about herself to the coach, each time she completes a lap. After the work out, there is cool down and further processing, then the hour ends with cheer and energy awards.

Our curriculum is divided generally into three parts:

1. The first six lessons are centered on the girls getting to know themselves. Examining their values, their likes and dislikes, who they envision themselves to be. As the girls get to know themselves, they are also sharing with each other.
2. This leads into the next group of lessons which concentrate on team building, being supportive, learning to listen and cooperate, etc.
3. Finally, the last group of lessons relate to the world at large. This includes making a contribution to your community (family, school, etc.) and also the negative messages we can receive from the world (media awareness, negative peer pressure, etc.)

The lessons conclude with the opportunity to participate in the New Balance Girls on the Run 5k event. Our 5k series is the second largest in the world and is one of the most moving and unique events in Michigan.

Repeating the Program

It is very common for girls to participate in multiple seasons of Girls on the Run. We offer 3 different curriculums (one in the spring, one in the fall and one for middle school girls - Girls on Track). Each girl's second (and some times third and fourth) experience with the curricula is different from the first. Repetition is an important part of the learning process which allows each girl a feeling of mastery and an opportunity to be a leader or mentor to those who are new to the program.

Fees and Scholarships

Our registration fee is \$125. And we offer partial and full scholarships as well as running shoes to girls in need.

Included in the fee price are:

- 20 ninety minute lessons conducted by a certified GOTR coach
- lesson handouts
- a Girls on the Run t-shirt
- a Girls on the Run water bottle
- healthy snacks at each session
- a 5k event, medal and goody bag
- And an end of season celebration
- The girls complete the program with a stronger sense of identity, a greater acceptance of themselves, a healthier body image and an understanding of what it means to be part of a team.

Evaluation

Depending on the session, participants in the program are given a pre- and post survey to evaluate attitudinal changes. This data helps us to evaluate our programs. According to the Michigan Women's Commission report on "The Status of Young Women in Michigan", released in Spring 2009, 41% of high school females in Michigan report having had sexual intercourse. Michigan's teen pregnancy rate (females ages 15-19) is 54 per 1,000. Every eight days, a woman in Michigan dies from causes related to domestic violence. Michigan has the nation's highest percentage of 19-29 year old female smokers. Michigan ranks 35th nationally in percent (22%) of college-educated women.

Michigan ranks the third worst among the states for rate of obesity and has been among the ten heaviest states for the past 14 years. Nationally, 9.6% of high school females are overweight, in Michigan the number is 15.6%, however 34.8% of Michigan girls described themselves as being

overweight. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that in all grade levels, girls engage in significantly less physical activity than do boys.¹ This difference becomes more pronounced as girls enter middle and high schools.² However, studies show that that exercise serves as a fundamental component of emotional health, self-empowerment, and self-esteem for girls, leading to higher self-respect, healthier life choices, and avoidance of self-destructive behaviors.^{3,4,5,6}

Exercise is also known to benefit physical health and prevent a host of diseases and conditions including coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and low bone density.⁷ Girls on the Run addresses both the physical and emotional needs of girls at this critical developmental juncture to prepare them for adolescence and to prevent risky behaviors.

A spring, 2006 evaluation of the national Girls on the Run program found that the program increased self-esteem and body size satisfaction among participants.⁸ An academic evaluation of the 2005 program found statistically significant improvements in self-esteem, body size satisfaction, physical activity behaviors,⁹ and a 2002 evaluation found improvements in self-esteem, body size satisfaction, and eating attitudes/behaviors.¹⁰

Thank you for your interest in supporting Girls on the Run and helping us expand our reach in the community. If you have any further questions don't hesitate to contact us.

Shana Bussa, Community Outreach and Development Coordinator
P.O. Box 995 Ann Arbor, MI 48106
(734) 712-5640
shana@girlsontherunsemi.org
www.girlsontherunsemi.org

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2006. *Morbidity & Mortality Weekly Report*. 2006; 55(SS05):1-108.

² Armstrong N, Welsman JR, Kirby BJ. Longitudinal Changes in 11-13-Year-Olds' Physical Activity. *Acta Paediatr*. 2000;89(7):775-80.

³ The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. Physical Activity and Sport in the Lives of Girls: Physical and Mental Health Dimensions from an Interdisciplinary Approach. Washington, DC: President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, 1997.

⁴ Aaron DJ, Dearwater SR, Anderson R, Olsen T, Kriska AM, Laporte RE. Physical Activity and the Initiation of High-Risk Health Behaviors in Adolescents. *Med Sci Sports Exerc*. 1995;27(12):1639-45.

⁵ Ferron C, Narring F, Cauderay M, Michaud PA. Sport Activity in Adolescence: Associations with Health Perceptions and Experimental Behaviours. *Health Educ Res*. 1999;14(2):225-33.

⁶ Stein C, Fisher L, Berkey C, Colditz G. Adolescent Physical Activity and Perceived Competence: Does Change in Activity Level Impact Self-Perception? *J Adolesc Health*. 2007;40(5):462.

⁷ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Physical Activity and Health: A Report of the Surgeon General. 1996.

⁸ Debate RD. Girls on the Run: Formative Impact Evaluation. Spring, 2006. Available at: <http://girlsontherun.sitewizard.biz/customers/105120616203947/filemanager/2006speval.pdf>. Accessed 11/06/2007.

⁹ Debate RD. Girls on the Run: Formative Evaluation Report. Spring, 2005. Available at: http://girlsontherun.sitewizard.biz/customers/105120616203947/filemanager/evaluation_2005.pdf. Accessed 11/06/2007.

¹⁰ DeBate RD, Thompson SH, 2005. Girls on the Run: improvements in self-esteem, body size satisfaction and eating attitudes/behaviors. *Eat Weight Disord*. 2005;10(1):25-32.