Girls on the Run of the High Country

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Girls on the Run (GOTR) and Girls on Track (GOT) are life-changing, experiential learning programs for 3rd-8th grade girls. Each 12 week program uniquely combines running as a life skill with the goals of the program: the encouragement of positive emotional, social, mental, and physical development. 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 and a member of a larger community.

GOTR of the High Country was started in the Fall of 2009 with 4 coaches and 13 girls. Today, we have 8 sites in operation with 41 coaches and 90 girls participating. Approximately 300 girls have complete the program and we expect to add another 100 in the Spring of 2013!!

At the end of each session, girls participate in a 5k run of GOTR participants and their running buddies. This is the most exciting and emotional time of the season. It is a time where girls come together and draw on their individual and collective strengths to push themselves and encourage their friends to achieve a goal they have been working toward for 12 weeks. In the Spring of 2012 we hosted our first 5k here in Watauga County. See page 4 for the success story. To see an account of one family’s race experience, see an excerpt from our founder’s blog on page 2.
Determining where our worth comes from, living in the world of “human,” can be challenging. I know that for me ever since adolescence, there was, this huge game of tug-o-war between the strong, empowered, self-assured, spiritual in-here-girl who knows she is worthy just because she is ... with the physical out-there-girl who still at times wants so much to be liked, popular and accepted by others. The back and forth is constant, and so too is the growth and learning that comes with it.

I am reminded of Paul.

He is 39 years old. A handsome professional man, Paul drives a BMW and wears custom suits with starched, crisp, white button-down shirts. He is respected and reserved. Yet little known to his friends is the hell in which he has lived. You see, eight years ago his wife, his life partner and best friend died. She died giving birth to their daughter Shelby.

Shelby’s entrance into this world wasn’t easy. For hours, over 20 innocent and vulnerable hours, Shelby and her mom worked tirelessly to take her from the warm safe waters of her mother’s womb to this world. So when Shelby was finally lifted into this world, her mother went on to the next.

Paul’s world isn’t what he had expected: the crisp starch of his collar, the million-dollar home and a daughter, who looked like every other 8-year old, but had the intellectual and conceptual understanding of a 4-year old.

His life felt like hell. It’s hard work being a single Daddy with a developmentally delayed little girl. Every morning as he would gently brush her hair, Shelby would tell him stories—stories that break a father’s heart. Stories of how she is afraid to speak sometimes, because the other students at her school make fun of her. Stories of how they call her dummy or generally disregard her as anything, but a nuisance. Paul didn’t know what else to do and so when the Girls on the Run brochure floated home in her book bag, he enrolled her. Shelby’s spirit soared at Girls on the Run. Her teammates understood her uniqueness and accepted her not in spite of it, but because of it.

Over the program-weeks, Shelby had come to trust her teammates. They didn’t make fun of her. They wrapped their little souls around her and walked her through the Girls on the Run games and activities. The Girls on the Run girls were different. They listened to her when she had something to say and they saw the humanness of her. They valued her for who she was.

On this particular day, Shelby was running in her first Girls on the Run 5k and her father was there to see her. I stood at the finish line cheering, clapping and high-fiving girls as they crossed that finish line. One hour later, every girl had finished. “No wait,” the police escort informed us, “there is one more little girl.” And so, while most folks had moved on to the after-party in the nearby park, a handful of us waited. Slowly word spread that Shelby was finishing and one by one folks returned to the finish line. As Shelby made her way up that last stretch of road, hundreds of people ran to take their place roadside.

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When I was first asked to be a “Girls on the Run” coach, I thought “I don’t know if I can add one more thing to my plate.” I teach Kindergarten and am pretty tired at the end of the day. I decided to coach because running is a stress release for me, and thought it would be fun to teach girls the benefit of running. I quickly learned that “Girls on the Run” is much more than a running program. This is my 5th season coaching, and I love every minute of it.

Each season, I feel fortunate to be a part of the girls’ lives. I watch them start the season as timid girls. They evolve into a “family” that shared their thoughts and they encourage each other. It amazes me how they learn to verbalize their feelings. The girls learn to become healthy physically and emotionally. They learn that they can have a goal for themselves and can achieve it. What an amazing life lesson to be taught at a young age! Seeing the girls cross the finish line at the 5k is “priceless”.

When I walk through the halls at school, I love that the girls are excited to meet me. They are open to give hugs and be themselves. They are living outside of the “girl box”; and I have had the opportunity to coach girls who have been in the program for several seasons. I have watched their faces and body language change into confident girls who are proud of themselves and have become strong runners. I often tell people that I would never coach “Girls on the Run” after teaching Kindergarten all day unless I truly loved it. Well, I truly love my time with the girls and I am energized after each lesson. It keeps me grounded and inspires me to be a positive role model for the girls. Girls on the Run is so much fun!

Anna Welsh

- continued from previous page, From Molly’s Blog

The momentum was building and then as if directed to do so I looked to my right and there dead center in the finish line stood Paul. His starched shirt, khaki pants and polished loafers. His hair was perfectly placed. Shelby’s jacket was neatly draped across his left arm.

The man was stoic, reserved, empty eyed... and alone.

And then without warning, this man, this brave, brave man dropped to his knees...Shelby’s coat falling to the asphalt below...and with wild abandon, he lifted his arms to the heavens above and wept from the depths of his soul. Tears were flowing down his cheeks to the earth below, like small blessings on the path of his daughter’s approaching feet.

I won’t ever be able to shake the image of this man as he fell to his knees, surrendering his pain, revealing his willingness to shed the external armor of the man he had become, trapped in the box of cultural success and first impressions, to reveal the little boy he once was...unafraid and willing to share his soul, his core, his vulnerabilities... To welcome his little girl, Shelby, as she ran to him, there at the finish line. Welcome her with his arms around her small body to lift her high to the sky above. Welcome her to this new life, this new heaven, the one in which they could inhabit peacefully together.
Our Success!!

Girls on Track - This season we were able to have our first Girls on Track site for middle school aged girls in Watauga County. The group meets at Paul H. Broyhill Wellness Center in Boone. There has been great enthusiasm for this program and we hope to add more GOT sites throughout our territory in the future.

ZAP Fitness Girls on the Run High Country 5k - Previously, we have traveled to Asheville to join with the GOTR of Western North Carolina in their 5k race. Despite rain, clouds, ducks and threatening skies, we were able to host our first 5k this past Spring on ASU campus. The event was a huge success and this Fall we will continue the tradition with our second 5k event at Valle Crucis Park on December 8th at 10 am.

Sole Provider Fund - Thanks to the enthusiasm and big heart of one of our coaches who spearheaded the effort, GOTR High Country was able to provide shoes for all participants in the Fall of 2011. At the time, New Balance was a National Sponsor and we received great discounts on their shoes so it was very affordable! The next season, New Balance was unable to continue its sponsorship—but we still purchased and delivered shoes to all the girls! Without the discounts we previously received, we have unfortunately had to postpone this part of the program. For more information or to make a contribution to this cause, please contact Gotr High Country Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina Institute for Health and Human Services, ASU Box 32102, Boone, NC 28608 Or contact Mary Sheryl Horine at (828) 262-7557 or horinems@appstate.edu
The High Country Triple Crown and Girls On The Run

www.triplecrown.appstate.edu

The High Country Triple Crown is the premier running series in the High Country of North Carolina and the number one fundraiser for GOTR-HC. 100% of the proceeds from the race series go to benefit Girls on the Run of the High Country with a donation of $2000 being donated in 2011 and $5000 in 2012!! Stacy Sears, Race Director, brings a wealth of information and loads of enthusiasm to the series!

In existence for over six years and headquartered in Boone, NC, the Triple Crown consists of three races of varying difficulty and terrain. All races showcase the breathtaking scenery of the NC mountains coupled with the vitality of the local community. Runners are encouraged to compete in all three races for special prizes and reduced fees.

The Cub: The Cub is a 7 mile race through the countryside of Valle Crucis, NC. Popularity for this race has grown in past years with numbers increasing from 93 in 2011 to 109 in 2012.

High Country Half Marathon: Brand new in 2011, this race has also grown in popularity! Participants for 2012 increased to 224 from 143 the year before! The race starts at ASU Kidd Brewer Stadium and follows 13.1 miles of unsurpassed beauty, finishing at the Blowing Rock Equestrian Center.

The Knob – The Knob is a 2 mile uphill challenge that is celebrated as part of ASU’s homecoming festivities. This race is an evening run beginning at 5:30pm and reaches an elevation of 4,406 feet above sea level -nearly 1,000 feet above the town of Boone!

You can support GOTR-HC by participating in the Triple Crown races. Please register for any or all of the races at www.triplecrown.appstate.edu. You can also support us by volunteering for the Triple Crown as our multifaceted, high quality running events are run solely by a dedicated volunteer staff. For more information on volunteering please call Bliss Hemric at 828-262-6069.

Join the GOTR Team!!

Over the past few seasons we have experienced remarkable growth and have encountered many people in the High Country interested in starting a site at their school! This is extremely exciting for us and GOTR High Country is interested in building partnerships in Ashe, Avery, Alleghany, Wilkes and Watauga Counties. If you would like to volunteer as a coach, get a site started at your school or other community location, we have created a checklist of what you will need!

- 2 Coaches (must complete application and be available to coach 2 days per week)
- Completed Site Application
- Meeting Location

Applications can be viewed and downloaded at http://gotr.appstate.edu/start-program.

All applications must be returned to: Girls on the Run High Country
ASU Box 32102
Boone NC 28608
Or faxed to: (828) 262-7680.

The deadline to receive new site applications for Spring 2012 is November 15th!
GOTR of the High Country is sponsored by:

2012-2013 Sustaining Sponsors
◊ Diane Davant and Associates
◊ ZAP Fitness
◊ Best Cellar/Inn at Ragged Gardens

Founding donors
◊ Chip and Amanda Williamson
◊ Walter J. Hoyt Family
◊ ZAP Fitness
◊ John and Faye Cooper
◊ Boone Drugs, Inc.
◊ ARHS, Wellness Center
◊ Rob and Jackie Dyer of the Best Cellar/Inn at Ragged Gardens
◊ Mayhew, Scheffler, Conn and Hardaway Orthodontists and Pediatric Dentists
◊ Gaines Kiker Silversmith/Goldsmith
◊ High Country Energy Solutions
◊ Jay and Michelle Johnson
◊ BeActive Appalachian Partnership
◊ Dianne DaVant and Associates
◊ ASU Institute for Health and Human Services
◊ Larry and Mary Ellen Horine

Partners:
◊ Appalachian State University Institute for Health and Human Services
◊ BeActive Appalachian Partnership
◊ ZAP Fitness
◊ Earth Fare of Boone

GOTR-HC Advisory Committee Members:
◊ Mary Sheryl Horine
◊ Carol Cook
◊ Jackie Dyer
◊ Stacy Sears

Learn
Dream
Live
Run.

WHAT I LIKE ABOUT GOTR

I joined GOTR in my 2nd semester of 3rd grade and, even though they teach us the same thing every year, it means more each time I learn it. In GOTR we get in shape but we also learn how to show more respect for ourselves and others. We have a conversation about the lesson, we play a game, and we do a workout. After GOTR we do energy awards and have a snack. I like everything about GOTR, especially the games we play.

—Carsyn, Age 9

Dates to Remember

November 1st & 3rd: LUNAFEST at 6:30pm
www.lunafest.org/Boone
November 24th: Blowing Rock Christmas Parade
December 1st: Boone Christmas Parade
December 8th: ZAP Fitness GOTR High Country 5k @ Valle Crucis Park (10am)
January 21st: Spring Registration Open
January 27th: Spring Coach Training
February 4th: GOTR-High Country Spring Start Date
March 17th: Luck O’ the Lassie