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**What is Girls on the Run?**

**Girls** on the Run (GOTR) is an uplifting, empowering and life-changing program that focuses on teaching life lessons to girls in the 3rd – 5th grades. This year we’ve also added a brand new curriculum for girls in middle school called Heart and Sole (H&S- more about that on pg. 5) With 24 lessons delivered over the course of 12 weeks, GOTR and H&S inspire girls to be healthy and confident using an experience-based curriculum that creatively integrates running. At the end of the 12 weeks, the girls experience a sense of accomplishment and pride in themselves as they complete a 5k with hundreds of other participants and their running buddies.

**GOTR** began in the High Country in the fall of 2009 with 4 coaches and 13 girls. We have grown dramatically since then and have now spread to 12 sites, over 160 girls and 47 coaches in Watauga, Avery and Wilkes counties for just the fall 2015 season! We no longer travel to join another council for the end-of-season 5k but host 2 seasonal events of our own – one in Wilkes and one in Watauga. We have gotten creative with our fundraising and host the High Country Triple Crown Race Series (pg. 5 ) and our annual Luck O’ the Lassie event at The Best Cellar/Inn at Ragged Gardens in Blowing Rock ( pg. 2 ). Due to great effort put into these events and grant applications, we are able to offer full or partial scholarships to over 65% of our participants!!

**We** are constantly in need of support for our fundraisers and 5k events and would like to increase our reach into Ashe and Alleghany Counties. If you are interested in helping get a site started at your school or community, volunteering at one of our 5k events or Triple Crown races, participating in one of our races, donating items, or sponsoring a fundraiser, please let us know. We would love to have you join us in helping girls discover their potential and inspiring them to pursue their dreams!
On March 16, 2016, Girls on the Run of the High Country will host its 6th annual Luck O’ the Lassie (LOL) celebration at the Best Cellar/Inn at Ragged Gardens in Blowing Rock. In a very festive and fun evening, the event highlights the contributions made by all of our volunteers while at the same time raising funds to support the GOTR scholarship program. With approximately 65% of our participants receiving financial support in order to participate, this event is of vital importance to the organization. We are in need of donated goods or services to auction at the event, so if you have an “in” at a hotel, a vacation condo, a golf course or restaurant, please let us know! Do you know someone who would donate a massage or a veterinary check-up? We would love to talk to you. All donations of goods and services are tax deductible and they will truly make a difference in our ability to offer an affordable program for all girls.

Another great community event hosted by Girls on the Run in conjunction with the Women’s Fund of the Blue Ridge is the annual Lunafest Film Festival. Scheduled in Boone on April 7 and 8, 2016, this film festival highlights women as leaders in society, illustrated through nine short films by women filmmakers. The films range from animation to fictional drama, and cover topics such as women’s health, motherhood, body image, aging, cultural diversity and breaking barriers.

**GOTR Summer Camp is Back!**

Two summers ago, GOTR-HC piloted a summer camp program that incorporated the entire Girls on the Run curriculum combined with traditional summer fun activities. Girls met daily for two weeks and experienced a jam-packed schedule that included swimming, hiking, ultimate Frisbee, nutritional cooking, art, soccer, tennis, BR Equestrian Preserve and behind the counter tours of several establishments.

This summer we plan to offer two, 2-week sessions of summer camp during the month of July. Two of the weeks will be dedicated to rising 4th through 6th graders (GOTR) and two weeks will be for rising 7th and 8th graders (Heart and Sole).

We plan to finalize the exact weeks and will offer more information regarding fees and activities in the coming months.
Tomboy Fashion & Crayons

Honest. That is initially how I became involved in Girls on the Run. Three years ago I invited a group of my fifth grade students to race in the Color Run in Winston Salem. We called ourselves the “Fastest Crayon in the Box” and I’ve been running ever since. Not long after the race, (and still on a natural high from the race experience with young girls), I was window shopping through my favorite tomboy catalog. It was there in the pages of Athleta where I was drawn to an ad for Girls on the Run. I recall thinking that it could be an opportunity to combine my new love of running with a chance to mentor girls outside of the classroom. I made the contacts, attended training, and with the help of my most valuable colleagues, we implemented the very first GOTR team at Mulberry Elementary. The GOTR program gives the girls and I a chance to build a more personal relationship outside of our “business” relationship in the school setting. Quite frankly, it allows me the time to get to know my girls on a more emotional level that I wish I had the time for during the school day. They open up during the lessons with the challenges they are facing at home, with peers, and at school. Aside from the actual hard work and reward of fitness, that is my favorite part about the program. Put simply, there is no price tag that could possibly measure the value that GOTR has on our girls. From the lessons that foster the building blocks of strong moral values to the thrill of finishing their first 5k, GOTR is a life-changer. Last summer I witnessed a young lady and her dad religiously running together in the evenings. I remember being so impressed with their dedication and quality of time spent together. Little did I know at the time, that young lady would be my very own fifth grade student during the upcoming year. When I officially met her for the first time, I complimented her commitment to running throughout the summer with her father and asked what had inspired her to do so. Her response left me in awe. She simply said, “I missed the deadline for Girls on the Run last year, and I’ve been training all summer to be on the team.” Needless to say, she was the very first to turn in her application. So, I raise my sticker-covered water bottle and toast GOTR for the simplicity of running with less distraction and more connection with the future generation of women.
Wellness Tip: Practicing Joy
by Brittany Storm Rankin

You don’t have to have perfect life circumstances or feel happy every moment of every day to lead a joyful life. It may be cliché, but joy is not a destination - it is a journey. The more you practice joyfulness, the more naturally joyful you will become. Try these 10 tips to experience more joy in your life.

Practice gratitude. One of the easiest ways to feel joy is to recognize all of the blessings in your life. Keep a gratitude journal and jot down five things you are thankful for each day, or practice gratitude in your daily activities. For example, each time you wash your hands, think of something or someone in your life you appreciate.

Give back. Not only does it help someone in need, volunteering will bring you joy and put your problems in perspective.

Be silly! Life is more joyful when we don’t take it so seriously. Play tag with your kids, chase your dog around the yard, sing off-tune at the top of your lungs, tell a joke, start a dance party, let it go.

Spend time in nature. Fresh air, sunshine, green grass and a little exercise does wonders for the soul.

Make time for activities you love. Read a book, sketch or paint, write a short story, listen to music, take a dance class, go for a run or cook a meal. Whatever brings you happiness, do it as often as possible.

Get some exercise. Exercise increases the production of endorphins, our bodies’ feel-good hormones.

Take a break from technology and connect with someone in real life. Instead of spending an hour surfing Facebook, call a friend you haven't spoke to in awhile or go for a walk with a family member. Real-life connections tend to be more satisfying than online interactions.

Rock a bright-colored outfit. Feeling blah? Throw on a t-shirt or scarf in your favorite bright shade or a sparkly piece of jewelry. It may just brighten your mood.

Make someone’s day. Give a loved one a hug for no reason, invite the new person at work or school to sit with you at lunch, compliment the grocery store cashier on her earrings, or smile at each person you see and say hello. Slow down and recognize the opportunities you have to improve someone else’s day.

Treat yourself as kindly as you treat others. If you are having an off day, don’t beat yourself up. It is normal to feel blue occasionally. Treat yourself with the same love and patience you show to others.

Site Application Deadline: December 1st
Please visit our website at http://gotr.appstate.edu/start-program to learn how to start Girls on the Run at your school or community center!
Girls on the Run of the High Country is both fortunate and proud to have the High Country Triple Crown (HCTC) as our #1 fundraiser. Operating for 11 years, the HCTC hosts runners from all over the country to participate in the series which consists of The Cub (7 miles), The High Country Half Marathon (13.1 miles) and The Knob (2 miles). The HCTC also added a fun event this year — The Bonk — which was a 2-mile downhill run at the same time as The Knob.

The 2015 race series again achieved huge success with over 400 runners participating. All proceeds from the events are donated to Girls on the Run and a check will be presented during the annual Luck o’ the Lassie on March 16, 2016!

2016 HCTC races will be held May 28 (The Cub), August 27 (High Country Half Marathon) and October 8 (The Knob/The Bonk). Please consider either volunteering for one of the races or registering to walk or run!

Heart & Sole, Our New Curriculum for Middle School

Girls on the Run believes adolescents bring a lot to the table. Girls of this age are often sorting through conflicting messages about their worth, their abilities and their value. Our middle school program helps girls develop the skills to tune into their own truths and to unleash their power to live confidently and joyfully.

Heart & Sole is Girls on the Run’s new program for middle school girls that was released to girls in the High Country Council this fall. Heart & Sole creates a positive, structured space for middle school girls to learn about themselves, explore new ideas, cultivate empathy, strengthen connections and develop life skills that will help them as they move through adolescence and beyond. The curriculum is rich with themes girls can relate to and addresses the whole girl—body, brain, heart, spirit and social connection—and builds important life skills such as team building, developing a support system, boundary setting, decision making, asking for and providing help and more.

This 10-week program is accessible to all girls regardless of athletic ability or fitness level. We also invite home-schooled girls to participate. Physical activity includes strength and conditioning appropriate for this age group. As with the 3rd-5th grade program, the season culminates with the Girls on the Run 5k, which is the celebratory event that underscores the confidence, competence, connection, character and caring they’ve been developing in the program and gives them a tangible sense of goal setting and achievement.
GOTR of the High Country is sponsored by:

2015 Grant Supporters
- Women’s Fund of the Blue Ridge

2015 Sustaining Sponsors
- Walter J. Hoyt Family
- ZAP Fitness
- Best Cellar/Inn at Ragged Gardens

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- Chip and Amanda Williamson
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- Mayhew, Scheffler, Conn and Hardaway Orthodontists and Pediatric Dentists
- Gaines Kiker Silversmith/Goldsmith
- High Country Energy Solutions
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- Beaver College of Health Sciences

GOTR-HC Advisory Committee
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Sponsor Spotlight:
Gaines Kiker Silversmith

Girls on the Run of the High Country would like to spotlight one of our long-time supporters - Gaines Kiker. A designer metalsmith, Gaines specializes in silver, gold, platinum, mixed metals and precious stones. His gallery showcases an impressive collection of contemporary jewelry, sculpture and functional art. Gaines also specializes in custom designs drawn from the simplicity of pure geometrical forms. Inspired by the lines of a natural rock formation or the curve of a building’s arch, Kiker’s work articulates balance, form and movement in clean, fluid lines. He is an artist who refines raw materials into simply elegant designs one is eager to wear every day. "What I want to do is take your idea and make it into something that is an expression of your personality."

In business for over 20 years, Gaines started by earning a BFA in Metal Design from East Carolina University and then completed an apprenticeship with Ubaldo Vitali, an Italian silversmith in New York. He has studied at Penland School of Crafts, at the Gemological Institute of America and was a student in the University of Georgia's graduate studies abroad program in Cortona, Italy. Gaines was a recipient of the North Carolina Emerging Young Artists Award in 1992 from the Charlotte Mecklenburg Arts Council. He has been featured in the North Carolina "Our State" magazine and "North Carolina's Taste Full" magazine, Charlotte’s “Urban Home” magazine, as well as other local magazines and newspapers. He is a member of the American Craft Council and the Society of North American Goldsmiths.

In his shop, which is located on Morris Street in Blowing Rock, North Carolina, he works surrounded by simple tools, many of which he modified himself to suit his needs as an artisan silversmith. Kiker finds his deepest gratification in the communion found during the creative process itself, making each piece deeply personal and a physical illustration of his ingenious nature.