

Girls on the Run

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If you are a parent, aunt, uncle, grandparent or friend of a child who happens to be female, you may have noticed an interesting phenomenon that takes place sometime around the fifth or sixth grade. It's at that age that many young girls, even girls who before had been supremely confident in their talents and abilities, begin to withdraw into what has been termed the "girl box." If you haven't heard of the "girl box," that's the place where girls are valued more for their outward appearance than their character inside.

Girls on the Run (GOTR) is a non-profit program dedicated to helping girls stay out of the "girl box." The program began in Charlotte, NC just over 10 years ago, and now has reached over 50,000 girls in multiple communities across the U.S. The program was piloted in Pocatello last summer, and ran a session last fall. This spring, it is being expanded to an after-school program at several area schools.

GOTR uses the term "running" loosely—girls can run, hop, skip, speed walk, or even dance towards their goals. The lessons, led by trained volunteer coaches and conducted twice a week for 10 weeks, promote self-challenge instead of competition; self-worth instead of societal worth; and cooperation instead of rivalry.

Goals for each girl are for her to:

- Understand her place and value in the community
- Have a stronger sense of identity
- Learn how to give and receive support in a group
- Learn to stand up for herself in a healthy manner
- Have an improved body image, and
- Complete a 5K run/walk event

These goals are achieved through an innovative curriculum that includes warm-ups, running workouts, and games that teach important skills such as how to make healthy decisions and how to resolve conflicts.

It is important to note that this is not a competitive running program. Girls are not "evaluated" based on running times (although there is certainly value in that type of program, as well). Rather, girls are encouraged to do their best, and to recognize the sense of accomplishment that can come from putting forth their best effort.

Perhaps one of the greatest benefits of GOTR is that it helps girls understand that regular physical activity, and healthy choices overall, are fun and rewarding. The looks on girls' faces when they run farther than they ever thought they could, when they encourage a teammate to keep running, when they cross the finish line of their end of session 5K...those things are priceless, and make this program a true asset to our community.

Girls on the Run of SE Idaho is appreciative to the following sponsors, who have made GOTR possible in our community: Pocatello Orthopaedics & Sports Medicine Institute; Pocatello Athletic Committee; SE Chapter of the American Medical Association; Rock Mountain Surgery Center; Bricks & Sticks Real Estate Company; Edmund & Judy Carroll; the Idaho Governor's Council on Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention; and the Southeastern District Health Department.

The Spring Session begins the week of April 2nd. Space is limited and available on a first-come, first-served basis. For more information, please call Kelly Wathne @ 220-2965 or Maggie Mann @ 239-5258.