



Running Our Lives

by Elizabeth Kunz, CEO of Girls on the Run International

Are you "at one" with Girls on the Run? Which of these statements best describes you?

- I love to run and I do it often.
- I have a love/hate relationship with running. I recognize its benefits, but it takes a lot of personal discipline.
- I do not enjoy running and avoid it.
- I don't know how I feel about running because I have never seriously attempted it.
- I am physically incapable of running.

Here's the great news . . . no matter what statement you chose, there's a place for you at Girls on the Run!

How is that possible when "run" is in our name?

While our curriculum incorporates running, our mission is not to teach girls to be runners. It is to inspire girls to be joyful, healthy and confident. Ultimately, **we want all girls to recognize that they are the leaders of their lives.**

A big part of being the leaders of our lives is taking care of our physical and emotional health. Physical activity supports and nurtures our emotional health, therefore finding joy in movement is an important learning goal of Girls on the Run.

Think back to the activities that were pure fun for you as a child. For me, biking, flying kites, hula-hooping and jumping on a trampoline come to mind! Our bodies are meant to move, yet the activities we choose don't have to be structured. What brings you joy? Whether you like to dance, swim, shoot hoops, garden, or "wave your hands in the air like you just don't care," there is pleasure in physical activity. **The key is understanding that we all have unique body types and diverse physical abilities; therefore, we must each figure out how we experience that joy.**



Families, relationships, communities, governments—all will be strengthened by the confident women that our girls grow up to become!

So why run?

Running is an accessible activity for most people, and progress is easy to measure. But you know what? Sometimes we *don't run*. Our goal is to move forward at a pace that is right for us—just like in life! Throughout our lives, whether we are 8 or 80, we build confidence by attempting hard things, taking meaningful risks and going outside of our comfort zone. *This* is why the girls in our program prepare for and complete a 5k—whether they run, walk, roll or skip across the finish line. It's all about setting a personal goal and doing our best to achieve it.

We want our girls to know they can run . . . their lives. They have the ultimate power to make their own choices, to think their own thoughts and to be their best possible selves. Families, relationships, communities, governments—all will be strengthened by the confident women that our girls grow up to become! **Girls have the power to change the world.** And what a wonderful world they will create by embracing their power to be the leaders of their lives!

Does all of this sound good to you? Then, indeed, you belong at Girls on the Run! ■

Girls on the Run is an empowerment program for girls in 3rd-8th grade—giving them skills and experiences to navigate their world and to unleash their limitless potential! We inspire girls to be joyful, healthy and confident using a fun, experienced-based curriculum which creatively integrates running. To learn more, visit www.girlsontherun.org.