

Fun on the run

St. Helena Star
Thursday May 25, 2011



Photo by Jeff Beard

And they're off! Leading the Girls on the Run 5k run in Tiburon are, from left: Katherine Partida, Joanna Fuentes, Lesley Arranga, (background) running buddy to her sister Charlene (in foreground) and Karina Velazquez, all from St. Helena. Local girls at the starting point under the center of the arch, with matching T-shirts are, from left: Hannah Michaels, Hope Hendricks and Emma Swan.

The girls of Girls on the Run Napa Valley (GOTR) had a memorable day on May 20, when 21 St. Helena girls, along with their coaches Michelle Beard, Wendy Cole, Erin Przybylinski and Janet Todd, along with parents, family members, and running buddies ventured to Tiburon to join the Marin GOTR Girls on the Run 5k (3.1 miles) Fun Run.

The morning turned out to be the perfect end to the girls' experience with the new life skills and running program.

Over 100 excited and nervous girls and supporters lined up for the run under a colorful arch of balloons, on a mission to achieve the goal for which they had been training the last 10 weeks. During the run along the bay, the girls ran stronger and faster than they ever had before. All the girls did their best, had fun and completed the run with big smiles and a sense of accomplishment. The girls and their families then enjoyed the GOTR celebration picnic where each girl received a special award.

"The program's success in our first season far exceeded our expectations, said executive director Janet Todd. "We had a diverse group of 29 girls with over 40 percent of the girls on schol-

arships. We also have heard from parents and teachers that some of the girls have become better students or improved their self-esteem because of their experience."

One girl shared what GOTR means to her: "Girls on the Run makes me happy. I learn more about feeling good about myself. They teach you to try your best instead of giving up. Now I keep trying until I can do it and that makes me happy. I can be with my dream."

GOTR is a fun, character building, after-school program for girls in 3rd-5th grade that incorporates uplifting games with didactic material that teach the girls life skill lessons while training them for the end-goal of completing a 5k run. Girls pay \$125 for participation, which includes not only the 10 weeks of life skill lessons and training, but also a T-shirt, water bottle, snacks, and race registration fees. Scholarships are granted to all eligible girls.

Three groups will be offered in the fall, starting the week of Aug. 20. Brochures will be distributed in the schools later this week and registration will begin on May 26. To contact GOTR, call (707) 968-0692 or visit www.gotrnapavalley.org to register online.

Girls On the Run

*Submitted by
Miriam Murphy*

SHES 3RD GRADE DUAL
IMMERSION TEACHER

GOTR is an innovative program that celebrates young girls by combining running with a whole-person philosophy and a wellness curriculum. The 10-week after-school program meets twice weekly to focus on developing a strong sense of identity, building supportive relationships, and contributing to our community, all the while preparing for the end-goal of completing a 5k-road race. Here are some comments from some of the participants:

By Alejandra Rodriguez, 3rd grade

Girls On the Run is a great program. I never used to like running but now I love to run. Girls On the Run taught me how to be in my pace. Before I always tried to go fast so I got tired and I was always last. Now when we run during P. E. I'm doing my pace and I'm first. I hardly ever walk. I'm really surprised that I can run 2 miles! They also teach us to be strong and brave. For example, if a bully is bothering you, you

can talk to him and tell him to stop. If he doesn't stop you can tell the teacher. That's better than telling him bad words because then it will keep going over and over. Girls on the Run makes me happy. I learn more about feeling good about myself. They teach you to try your best instead of giving up. Now I keep trying until I can do it and that makes me happy. I can be with my dream. I want all the girls in my class and in the school to try Girls on the Run because they can see what they're doing and learn better ways to do things. Girls On the Run is so much fun!

By Jazmin Chavez, 3rd grade

At first I didn't want to go to Girls on the Run. My mom asked me if I wanted to and I said no because I thought it was going to be hard for me. Now that I'm in Girls On the Run I like it because we do lots of activities like writing things that we want to stop doing. We also play a game where we read a sentence and if we don't know we go to one corner and if we do know what to say we go to another corner. My favorite things to do are run and talk about eating healthy food.

I'm happy because we're almost going to run the marathon of 3 miles in Marin.

By MarieElise Van Keuren,
3rd grade

Girls On the Run is so much fun. When we start we have a healthy snack like a Cliff Bar or trail mix. After that we go outside and stretch out. Then we play a game that requires running. We run around the Catholic School's block and get different counters for each lap we run. We usually run with a friend that has the same pace. After we run we stretch out again. We raise our hand and pick who should have an energy cheer. An energy cheer is when the person you picked goes into the middle of the circle and you do a cheer, like we yell "Superstar!" and you jump at them with your hands. When it is all over you do a Girls On the Run cheer. We put all our hands together and say, "Girls On the Run is so much fun!" First we say it softly, then we say it a little louder, then we say it loud. In Girls On the Run I've learned to treat other people nicely and I've made new friends. I've got to admit that Girls On the Run IS so much fun!