

**Saturday, November 4, 2006**

### **The Starting Line**

I just returned this morning from NYC, attending the Runner's World "Heroes of Running" Awards. Late night for me, in light of the fact that I had to fly out at 6:30 this morning back to Charlotte.

I never, in my wildest dreams, thought Girls on the Run would be where it is today...in over 141 cities across North America with upwards of 40,000 girls actively participating. Runner's World honored our program and 8 other "running activists" last night at a fabulous and uplifting party in mid-town NYC.

Frank Shorter was among the winners. He is as "lit from within" as anyone. You should see how he lights up when he talks about his passion for creating a world of "drug-free" athletes. Lisa Shannon, a feminist to the core and extraordinary woman, is raising money for the women of the Congo. Mark Goldstein, a breast cancer survivor, who has run every Race for the Cure was so incredibly humble as he accepted his award. Tim Twitmeier has covered more distance in his lifetime, than I would in several of mine. The ultra marathoner shared his story of how he got his start at ultra-marathoning through an ad in Runner's World. Paul Tergot, the marathoner who gives so much back to his African homeland and Deena Kastor both received awards for their contributions to others through the sport of running. Governor Mike Huckabee actually choked up upon accepting his award. This amazing man has lost over one hundred pounds and has found the motivation to share his story with countless others. Rudy Garcia, a double above-the-knee amputee is preparing for his first Ironman.

The venue was covered with large posters of past Runner's World magazine covers. They also displayed in "ginormous" poster size, the pictures from the December issue of Runner's World. After meeting the winners, their photos came to life for me. The photographer beautifully captured what Girls on the Run is all about with the girls leaping for joy beside and around me. I swear I can't look at that picture and not feel anything but TOTAL joy! The little girl to the right, by the way, in the green shirt is my own Helen. She is letting out the largest yell of all! Go Helen!

I walked away from the event totally humbled and totally in love with the amazing staff at Runner's World. They so get what Girls on the Run is all about. I think it takes a great deal of courage to push the envelope as they have done...to recognize the power of running and its correlation with lifting spirits and changing lives--to step back and take a profound look at the deeper meaning of running. The sanctuary that running provides to so many.

For me, running is that space in the day when I feel the most beautiful...the most connected with my Divine. I walked away from last night's event realizing that running may represent something different to each of us. For me it is the gift I've been given...first for self-awareness through the quiet time it provides me each morning as I head out the door. Secondly for the energy it gives me to sustain that kind of connectedness

throughout the day. And thirdly for the fun of it..sharing time with friends, the girls in our program and the women who so passionately engage themselves with our mission.

After returning to Charlotte, NC this morning, I drove up to Winston-Salem and had the opportunity to speak with a group of after-school providers at the N.C. After-School Coalition Conference. I love being in the company of people that hang out with kids. No agendas. No pretense. Just real, authentic and genuine people.

I've had little sleep, little time with my kids and so this evening...it will be kids, a good video, popcorn, our comfortable couch, a fleece blanket and time to ourselves.

In Girl Spirit!

Molly B.  
Founder and Vision Keeper  
Girls on the Run International

*posted by Molly Barker at 1:11 PM*